

# FROM PYRRHUS TO PYDNA

Roman Imperialism in the Hellenistic Mediterranean  
280 - 168 BCE

**Question:**

**What factors explain the emergence of Roman interstate hegemony?**

**A critique of the dominant culturalist paradigm.**

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# Abstract

This thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach combining research methods in history and political science to propose that the fundamental cause of Rome's entry into and later domination of the Greek world was its reaction to a series of geopolitical developments in the Mediterranean region around the years 219 – 188 BCE. The thesis contends that the dominant paradigm in current scholarship on Roman imperialism assigns too much value to the internal structures of Roman society and consequently overlooks the importance of developments in the interstate system, in which the Roman state was a participant.

Following Alexander's unexpected death in 323, his subordinates waged constant warfare for the next four decades to divide the spoils of his vast empire. By the 280s, these wars subsided, and an unstable balance of power emerged in the east Mediterranean, between the Antigonid, Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties.

This balance of power shattered seventy years later due to a sudden decline in Ptolemaic power, caused by a massive native uprising in Egypt, chronic domestic maladministration and a series of unfortunate coincidences. Ptolemaic collapse triggered what political scientists term a power-transition crisis, as it motivated the Antigonid and Seleucid rulers to launch aggressive wars with the aim of capturing Ptolemaic territory. Their aggression threatened the independence of minor Greek states, which attempted to recreate a tripolar balance of power in the region by appealing to Rome for intervention in the crisis.

With the Roman defeat of the two great dynasties and the collapse of the third, a new interstate system emerged in the Mediterranean: hegemony under the government of the Romans.

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# INTRODUCTION

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“For who is so worthless or indolent as to not wish to know by what means and under what system of polity the Romans in less than fifty-three years have succeeded in subjecting nearly the whole inhabited world to their government? Or who again is there so passionately devoted to other spectacles or studies as to regard anything as of greater moment than the acquisition of this knowledge?”

Polybius

Historians define the Hellenistic Period as the era spanning from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE to the battle of Actium in 31 BCE. Great empires waxed and waned throughout, until the chaotic world of Mediterranean polities was united and pacified under the empire of the Romans. At the beginning of the Hellenistic Period, the Roman Republic was an unremarkable city-state localised to central Italy; by its end, Rome dominated the entire Mediterranean. Studies of the political history of the Hellenistic Period attempt to chart and explain the transition of Rome's presence in the Mediterranean, from periphery in 323 to hegemony by 168. The establishment of Roman preponderance poses questions that have driven historical inquiry for over 2,000 years. The present study commits itself within this arena, assessing political history between 280 and 168 BCE primarily in the east Mediterranean.

Imperialism requires two causal explanations: how and why does it occur? That is, by what means do states successfully build empires, and what factors cause states to be imperialistic? One major approach in historical analysis of imperialism involves focusing on the internal characteristics of specific states. Historians identify power differentials between states based on their internal characteristics, which then form the basis for explaining why some states dominate whilst others are dominated. This can be a fruitful methodology for answering how certain states realise their imperialist ambitions: *A* enjoyed some specific structural advantages over *B*, so *A* conquered *B*. It is also convenient – if a state successfully builds an empire due to its internal characteristics, those same characteristics may also provide compelling reasons for why that state was imperialistic. Most current explanations of Roman imperialism during the Hellenistic Period adopt this paradigm. As analysed throughout the study, the dominant view in contemporary scholarship highlights the role of exceptionally militaristic attitudes in Roman politics and culture as the causal agent for Roman imperialism.

However, focus on state internal characteristics simplifies imperialism because it combines the 'how' and the 'why' into an integrated question with a singular answer, rather than approaching them as separate questions with separate answers. Though studying a society's internal biases in depth can be useful in some contexts, the approach is of limited value for understanding *why* states are imperialistic. The study's central contention is that states are not imperialistic and warlike due to their internal culture.

Rather, states are imperialistic due to the pressures of the international system in which they are participants. The methodology of explaining imperialism from a systemic perspective, considering multiple states instead of one alone, is a product of political science. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach combining research methods in history and in political science to argue that the fundamental cause for Roman imperialism was the occurrence of a power-transition crisis in the east Mediterranean around 202 – 188 BCE.

The aim therefore is to update our understanding of Roman imperialism through the application of modern political science theory. Current scholarship overlooks the importance of the Hellenistic states to the outcome of Roman hegemony, and this study intends to address this insufficiency. Moreover, it is the author's firm belief that the value of Classical Studies is enhanced by showing patterns of continuity between the ancient and modern world. Focusing on ancient interstate relations through adopting a modern political science framework yields valuable insights on contemporary international relations, and stresses the similarities between the ancient and modern world.

The study is presented in three chapters, bookended by an introduction and conclusion. The first chapter outlines the narrative history of the assessed period. The second chapter probes the exceptionalist argument that dominates present scholarship on Roman imperialism. The third chapter defines neorealism in political science, relates its value to Roman imperialism, and proposes that the fundamental cause of Roman expansion in the region was a power-transition crisis in the east Mediterranean.

Having established the study's purpose, methodology and structure, we can now examine a selection of the relevant literature. The study extensively uses ancient sources in addition to modern scholarship on the topic. The most important ancient writer is Polybius; and the key modern historians are William Harris and Arthur Eckstein. Lastly, the political scientists Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer contribute to the methodology of the study.

Polybius is crucial to all studies of Roman imperialism. His *Histories* were written during the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century in Rome while he was exiled from his native Greece; he lived through and personally witnessed many major geopolitical events in his work. His work analysed the political history of the Mediterranean from 264 – 146 BCE. Polybius had access to Roman state archives and travelled extensively, visiting the places where key



events in his work unfolded. He conducted interviews with witnesses to bolster his account of wars, political debates, and diplomatic exchanges. He closely read and critiqued the works of historians from his own time. Lastly, prior to his exile Polybius had been a cavalry commander and an important politician in the Achaean League,<sup>1</sup> and his experience and expertise in political and military matters made him an unusually well-qualified observer on his subject. These factors make Polybius a highly authoritative source; indeed, his has been the seminal work for all scholarship on mid-Republican Rome from antiquity to the present day.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, only a fifth of Polybius has survived to the present day, therefore he cannot be our only source. Other prominent ancient writers include Livy, Plutarch, and Justin. Livy's *From the founding of the city* charts Roman history from the city's mythical origins in the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century through to 9 BCE. His work closely followed Polybius' analysis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries, and though his analytical value is significantly below that of Polybius, Livy is useful because his work covers some of the gaps created by the loss of most of Polybius' work. Plutarch wrote dozens of biographies of prominent Greek and Roman statesmen, and a good number of them have survived intact to the present day. Many of Plutarch's *Lives* record the careers of individuals who were at the centre of the events we analyse here; therefore, Plutarch is an important source particularly for reconstructing the narrative of the period. Justin's *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* is a summary of the Roman Pompeius Trogus' history of Macedonia, which no longer survives outside of Justin's abridged version. He is less valuable than the three ancients already discussed, but his summary does provide some useful information. Finally, the study also makes extensive use of inscriptions and coins as sources. Epigraphic and numismatic evidence are valuable because they enhance and corroborate the statements of ancient historians.

Harris' *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome* is a highly influential book that has defined the analytical trend of the past forty years. For Harris, Roman imperialism had "dark and irrational roots." An "extreme degree of ferocity" was Roman society's primary

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<sup>1</sup> A confederation of city-states in southern Greece.

<sup>2</sup> For a thorough examination of Polybius' life and historical methods, see F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius, Volume I: Commentary on Books I – VI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 1-35.

characteristic, giving rise to a militaristic ethos that took on a “pathological character.”<sup>3</sup> Roman elites were particularly prone to belligerence and sought glory and plunder.<sup>4</sup> Harris attributed Roman imperial success to Polybius’ description of the *philotimia* of the Romans;<sup>5</sup> the ambition of Roman elites was responsible for their perseverance in warfare and their commitment to imperial expansion.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately Harris argues that Rome was an “unusually belligerent” state and it was this exceptionally militaristic character that defined its foreign policy.<sup>7</sup>

Harris’ views have been endorsed and amplified by a considerable number of historians over the past few decades. These scholars have produced a consistent body of work explaining Roman imperialism through exceptionally militaristic structures in Roman society. Nathan Rosenstein for instance described Rome’s dependence on constant warfare for maintaining social cohesion and public order, linking this dependence to the formation of “a fundamental belligerence among the city’s elite.”<sup>8</sup> Kurt Raaflaub argued that militaristic attitudes were “sufficiently engraved in the collective consciousness of the Romans to make war practically indispensable,” further stating that war was “necessary to satisfy the material and ‘ideological’ needs of an aristocracy that had adapted... to the demands of a warring community.”<sup>9</sup> Internal competition between elites manifested in the emphasis of conquest and the pursuit of an accomplished military career as prerequisites for the accumulation of political capital, wealth and power.<sup>10</sup> He concluded that the Romans “turned into imperialists... under the influence of specific experiences that shaped their collective outlook, attitudes and ‘mentality.’”<sup>11</sup> Stephen Oakley asserted that Roman

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<sup>3</sup> William V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327-70 BC* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 53.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>5</sup> ‘The love of honour, the pursuit of honours.’ (David Whitehead, “*philotimia*.” *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 10 Aug. 2018. <http://classics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-5021> ) Cf. Polybius, *The Histories* I.39.7.

<sup>6</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 186.

<sup>7</sup> William V. Harris, “Roman Warfare in the Economic and Social Context of the Fourth Century.” In *Staat und Staatlichkeit in der frühen römischen Republik, Akten eines Symposiums, 12.-15. Juli 1988, Freie Universität Berlin*, ed. W. Eder (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990), 495.

<sup>8</sup> Nathan Rosenstein, “Republican Rome.” In *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds. Asia, the Mediterranean, Europe and Mesoamerica*, ed. K. Raaflaub & N. Rosenstein (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 196-200.

<sup>9</sup> Kurt A. Raaflaub, “Born to be Wolves? Origins of Roman Imperialism.” In *Transitions to Empire: Essays in Greco-Roman History, 360-146 B.C., in honor of E. Badian*, ed. R.W. Wallace & E.M. Harris (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 296.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 297-98.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

imperialism was propelled by “an ideology of victory and an annual rhythm of warfare.”<sup>12</sup> Acts of individual heroism in battle led to a sharp increase in the champion’s political capital, and the willingness of Roman elites to personally risk themselves in combat points to the bellicosity of their state. The presence of militaristic attitudes in Roman society are “such important factors in any explanation of later Roman imperialism.”<sup>13</sup> Finally, Tim Cornell maintained that Roman imperialism could only be explained by answering the question of “why were the Romans so belligerent?”<sup>14</sup> His analysis of the subject is predicated on the assumption that a militaristic culture pervaded all aspects of Roman society, as he declared: “These facts... are themselves symptoms of the phenomenon that needs to be explained.”<sup>15</sup>

Eckstein’s works *Mediterranean Anarchy*, *Interstate War and the Rise of Rome*, and *Rome Enters the Greek East: From Anarchy to Hierarchy in the Hellenistic Mediterranean* are fundamental to the study. *Mediterranean Anarchy* is a direct response to Roman exceptionalism, which Eckstein critiqued by showing that highly militarized cultures were widespread throughout Mediterranean polities; therefore, Roman militarism was not exceptional compared to its neighbours. Moreover, he provided a good theoretical summary of the principles of neorealism and related their value to interstate relations in the Hellenistic Period. Cornell inadvertently stumbled upon the right question: discussing Roman militarism is less important than examining why militaristic culture arose in the first place. Eckstein addressed this by arguing that the anarchic structure of the ancient Mediterranean state-system fundamentally caused the development of militarized culture in individual states. That is, the interstate system influenced the development and decision-making of states.

*Mediterranean Anarchy* is a general survey of the political history of the ancient Mediterranean, whilst *Rome Enters the Greek East* is a monograph specifically focused on explaining the emergence of Roman hegemony in the east Mediterranean. The latter is an outstanding model for using theoretical insights from other disciplines in investigating ancient history. Eckstein argued that the true cause of Roman imperialism was a power-

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen Oakley, “The Roman conquest of Italy.” In *War and Society in the Roman World*, ed. J. Rich & G. Shipley (London: Routledge, 1997), 31.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>14</sup> Tim J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome: Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (C. 1000 – 264 BC)* (London: Routledge, 1995), 365.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

transition crisis in the east Mediterranean. This is the interpretation that the study endorses. We build on Eckstein through expanding the scope of the investigation, and by closer engagement with both Roman operational doctrine and the value of conquest for individual political advancement in Mediterranean states.

Finally, the political scientists Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer delivered comprehensive analyses of neorealism. Neorealism refutes culturalist explanations for historical outcomes at the theoretical level. The chief claim of neorealism is that the anarchic structure of state-systems generates historical outcomes, because the system overrides state internal characteristics. Therefore, to understand historical outcomes, the analytic focus must privilege the system over the individual state. Neorealism emphasizes that all states behave similarly due to the pressures of anarchy, therefore, the main goal of all states is survival. Furthermore, since the international system is anarchic, states can only protect their existence by resorting to militarization.

This introductory chapter has defined the parameters of the study and evaluated the key literature relevant to its purposes. We now begin our historical investigation of Roman imperialism.

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# CHAPTER I

# NARRATIVE

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## 1. Introduction

The Romans would build an empire that encompassed the entire Mediterranean. This chapter focuses on Rome's Mediterranean empire from 280 to 168. Their initial encounters with Greek powers occurred within Italy, but by 168 Rome imposed itself in Asia and Africa. Meanwhile in the east, four decades of brutal civil war following Alexander's unexpected death finally subsided. Three great dynasties established themselves firmly by the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century: the Ptolemies in Egypt, the Antigonids in Macedonia, and the Seleucids in western Asia.<sup>1</sup>

A consistent trend in the wars discussed below is the importance of Roman manpower reserves – while losing one major battle was disastrous for Greek states, Rome displayed an ability to absorb massive defeats in battle yet still emerge victorious from the war.

## 2. The Pyrrhic War (280 – 275 BCE)

The Pyrrhic War (280 – 275 BCE) is significant for being the first occasion that Rome went to war with a Hellenistic state. Pyrrhus of Epirus launched an invasion of Italy on behalf of the Greek city-state of Tarentum.<sup>2</sup> The Tarentine war with Rome had been provoked by an earlier incident. In 282, a Roman fleet was spotted off the coast near the city and upon its sighting the Tarentines attacked the fleet, sinking many ships and capturing some Roman citizens.<sup>3</sup>

After the attack, the Roman Senate despatched envoys to Tarentum, led by ex-consul L. Postumius Magellus.<sup>4</sup> The delegation was tasked with obtaining reparations for the lost ships, securing the release of captured Romans, and extraditing the culprits to face Roman justice. They presented these demands in the city's theatre. Instead of considering

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix below, Map 1.

<sup>2</sup> Pyrrhus of Epirus ruled the kingdom of Epirus from 306 – 302 & 297 – 272 BCE, the kingdom of Macedonia from 288 – 285 & 274 – 272 BCE, and Syracuse from 278 – 276 BCE. He was one of the most formidable enemies Rome faced in its history. Tarentum was a Greek city-state in southern Italy, and Epirus was a kingdom in north-western Greece.

<sup>3</sup> Appian of Alexandria, *The Samnite Wars* II. Cf. Cassius Dio, *Roman History* IX.39.1 – 3. *N.B.* This study utilises Harvard University Press' *Loeb Classical Library* series for ancient sources, in which Roman numerals are used to identify the first division of a source. For consistency and ease of reference, ancient sources are cited as they are in Loeb, and first divisions have also been bolded for clarity. "Cassius Dio, *Roman History* IX.39.1 – 3." therefore refers to book 9, chapter 39, sections 1 – 3 of the cited work.

<sup>4</sup> Lucius Postumius Magellus was a three-time consul elected in 305, 294, and 291 BCE.

the terms, the assembled Tarentines mocked Postumius for his poor command of the Greek language and his conspicuously Roman attire.<sup>5</sup> As Postumius exited the theatre, one citizen, Philonides, “pulled up his garment, and assuming a posture most shameful to behold, bespattered the sacred robe of the ambassador with the filth that is indecent even to be uttered.”<sup>6</sup> An assault of this nature on a diplomat was deemed to be an attack on the entire Roman state. Therefore, a fresh delegation was despatched, this time issuing an ultimatum to accept the previous terms or face war. The Tarentines refused the ultimatum. War with Rome now loomed.

The Tarentines knew they were incapable of resisting Rome alone. So, they wrote to Pyrrhus requesting him to lead their campaign. Pyrrhus eagerly seized the opportunity presented. But this was no altruistic intervention. Pyrrhus was a notoriously aggressive imperialist; sources emphasize his ambition and his devotion to warfare.<sup>7</sup> Pyrrhus viewed war with Rome as the first step in completing his grand strategy of forging a new Hellenistic empire in the western Mediterranean.<sup>8</sup>

Pyrrhus landed in Italy in 280 with some 30,000 soldiers.<sup>9</sup> The Epirote army possessed the attributes necessary for a conquest of Italy, both in its composition and its commander’s acumen. However, the Epirotes lacked numbers. This army represented virtually the entirety of their manpower. Reinforcements could not be procured from home, and Pyrrhus’ allies failed to meet their obligations in contributing troops.

The Epirotes secured significant victories against Roman armies in battle at Heraclea in 280 and at Asculum in 279. Although these battles were resounding defeats, strategically they worked in Rome’s favour. For every Epirote killed in action, the Romans

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<sup>5</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* **XIX**.5.1.; Appian of Alexandria, *The Samnite Wars* **II**.16.; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* **IX**.39.5. Cf. Kathryn Lomas, *Rome and the Western Greeks, 350 BC – AD 200: Conquest and Acculturation in Southern Italy* (London: Routledge, 1993), 47; Gary Forsythe, *A Critical History of Ancient Rome: From Prehistory to the First Punic War* (New York City: Routledge, 2005), 351; and John D. Grainger, *Great Power Diplomacy in the Hellenistic World* (New York City: Routledge, 2016), 135.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Hannibal declared that he regarded Pyrrhus as the greatest military commander in history behind Alexander, because of his ambitious desire to create a new Hellenistic empire. (Livy, *From the founding of the city* **XXXV**.14.5 – 10.; cf. Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* **XXV**.5.) Additionally, Plutarch records that Pyrrhus was “always and continually studying upon this one subject [warfare], regarding it as the most kingly branch of learning.” (*Life of Pyrrhus* **VIII**.2 – 3.) Pyrrhus’ extensive writings on military tactics and leadership buttress Plutarch’s claims.

<sup>8</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* **XIV**.3 – 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. **XV**.

lost two;<sup>10</sup> but while Rome could replenish its armies by drafting fresh recruits “as if from a fountain gushing forth,” Pyrrhus had already committed every soldier available to him. His losses were unsustainable.<sup>11</sup>

The Pyrrhic War ended in Roman victory. Pyrrhus withdrew to Epirus shortly after defeat in the battle of Beneventum in 275. The Roman advantage in manpower had proven decisive. For Pyrrhus, losing an army of 30,000 represented a critical blow that would take an entire generation to recover from; for Rome, armies of that size could be replaced with no difficulty. As Champion summarised, Rome was victorious due to this “relentless arithmetic of attrition.”<sup>12</sup> Roman manpower would also play a significant role in future conflicts.

It would take sixty years before Rome again came into conflict with a major Hellenistic power. In the interim, Rome fought two desperate wars in the western Mediterranean against Carthage.

### 3. The 140<sup>th</sup> *Olympiad* (220 – 216 BCE)

Polybius identified the 140<sup>th</sup> *Olympiad* as a crucial period in world history, because all the major Mediterranean powers went to war during this time. This section narrates the wars of the 140<sup>th</sup> *Olympiad*.

#### 3.1 The Second Punic War (218 – 201 BCE)

In the Second Punic War, Rome was once again pitted against a transcendent military genius in Hannibal,<sup>13</sup> and suffered catastrophic defeats at his hands. In the first three major battles of the war, at the Trebbia river, Lake Trasimene, and Cannae, Roman losses totalled near 120,000 soldiers either killed or captured;<sup>14</sup> including smaller battles,

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<sup>10</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus stated 15,000 Roman casualties against 13,000 Epirote casualties at Heraclea, whilst Hieronymus of Cardia claimed 7,000 Roman casualties against under 4,000 Epirote casualties (both figures are cited in Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* XVII.4.). We can take Hieronymus' figures as the more accurate, since having lived through the Pyrrhic War he is a more authoritative source than Dionysius, who wrote two centuries after. For Asculum we can ignore Dionysius' figures for the above stated reasons; additionally, he did not provide any figure for Epirote casualties. Hieronymus stated 6,000 Roman casualties and 3,505 Epirotes, the latter figure sourced from the non-extant personal memoirs of Pyrrhus himself. (Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* XXI.8 – 9.)

<sup>11</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* XXI.9 - 10.

<sup>12</sup> Jeff Champion, *Pyrrhus of Epirus* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2009), 63.

<sup>13</sup> Hannibal Barca (247 – c.182 BCE) was a Carthaginian general, widely regarded alongside Alexander the Great as the pre-eminent military commander of antiquity.

<sup>14</sup> Polybius stated 10,000 Roman survivors (*The Histories* III.74.6.) from 46,000 deployed (III.72.2, 11 – 13.) at the Trebbia. Livy (*From the founding of the city* XXII.7.2.) recorded 15,000 Roman



Roman losses in the three campaigning seasons from 218 – 216 BCE was perhaps 150,000 – equivalent to a fifth of the entire adult male population of Italy.<sup>15</sup>

The scale of Roman losses cannot be overstated. The reversals at the hands of Hannibal were among the worst defeats ever suffered by Rome and they had an enormous psychological impact on the populace. Livy summarised:

“Never, save when the City had been captured, was there such terror and confusion within the walls of Rome... Surely, there was no other people that would not have been overwhelmed by a disaster of such vast proportions.”<sup>16</sup>

Rome also suffered crippling blows to its political elite. Two consuls, a proconsul, two quaestors, twenty-nine military tribunes and eighty senators fell in battle from 218 - 215.<sup>17</sup> Rudderless, depleted of its manpower, and shorn of its allies,<sup>18</sup> Rome found itself in a precarious position during the Second Punic War, where its existence was gravely threatened.

Despite Hannibal’s astonishing successes, Rome emerged victorious from the Second Punic War. Following P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus’<sup>19</sup> decisive victory over Hannibal at the battle of Zama in 202, the Republic became the dominant state in the western Mediterranean, leaving elites free to turn their attentions to the Hellenistic east. As early as 217, some Greek observers had presciently recognised that the victor of the titanic conflict to their west would follow up their success by attacking the Greek world.<sup>20</sup> This cautiousness marked a significant shift in Hellenistic attitudes towards Rome, compared to the insolence that the Tarentines had exhibited in 280. Thus, the global significance of the Second Punic War had become apparent even as the conflict went on for years without

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casualties at Lake Trasimene, with which Polybius concurred (III.85.1 – 3.). At Cannae, Livy (XXII.49 – 52.) asserted 67,500 Roman casualties, whilst Polybius (III.117.) stated 85,630. These casualty figures sum up to 136,630 for Polybius and 108,500 for Livy, yielding a median of 122,565, the figure taken as the baseline here.

<sup>15</sup> Leonard Cottrell, *Enemy of Rome* (London: Evans Bros, 1960), 102.

<sup>16</sup> Livy, *From the founding of the city* XXII.54.8 – 11.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. XXII.49.16 – 17.

<sup>18</sup> Many of Rome’s Italic allies defected and joined forces with Hannibal after Cannae – notably including Tarentum. Breaking the Roman alliance system was at the centre of Hannibal’s overall campaign strategy.

<sup>19</sup> Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (henceforth ‘Scipio Africanus’) was consul on an unprecedented three consecutive occasions from 205 – 202 BCE, and is reckoned among the leading commanders of antiquity. His achievements included delivering Roman victory in the Second Punic War, annexing provinces in Iberia, and aiding his brother L. Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus in the Roman – Seleucid War.

<sup>20</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* V.104.3 – 5.

resolution. For these reasons, the war marked a turning point in Mediterranean interstate politics – statesmen in the east begun to base their decisions on events in the west.

As Rome and Carthage engaged in their hegemonic struggle, the Hellenistic powers concurrently renewed their old rivalries, embarking on a fresh series of wars against one another.<sup>21</sup> The Hellenistic kingdoms were nearly always at war with each other, as their rulers idolised Alexander and sought to assume his mantle as the master of the world. Attempting to reunite his empire was a project that drove Hellenistic kingship. Each of the great dynasties had newly anointed monarchs: Philip V, Antiochus III the Great, and Ptolemy IV Philopator.<sup>22</sup> As Polybius observed, the expansionist policies of the new kings would define the events of the forthcoming decades.<sup>23</sup> Almost immediately upon their respective coronations, they launched wars of conquest. Philip and the Achaean League together attacked Sparta and the Aetolian League in the Social War,<sup>24</sup> whilst Antiochus and Ptolemy met in the Fourth Syrian War.

### 3.2 The Social War (220 – 217 BCE)

The Social War resulted in victory for the Macedonian – Achaean coalition. With the Spartans and Aetolians defeated, the chief impact of the Social War was the establishment of Macedonian hegemony over mainland Greece. Moreover, the Achaeans

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<sup>21</sup> Alexander died in 323 BCE leaving no legitimate heir. Upon his death, his subordinates contested a series of civil wars for control of the vast Macedonian Empire. The Macedonian Empire thusly fragmented into the independent Hellenistic Successor States. The Antigonid dynasty founded by Antigonus I Monophthalmus (r.306 – 301 BCE) came to rule Macedon. The Seleucid dynasty founded by Seleucus I Nicator (r.305 – 281 BCE) would dominate Syria, Mesopotamia, Media, Persis, and the eastern provinces. The Ptolemaic dynasty founded by Ptolemy I Soter (r.323 – 282 BCE) spanned Egypt, the Levant, Cyprus, and Cilicia. These three dynasties formed the largest and most powerful of the Successor States, and they frequently jockeyed for power against one another throughout their existence, with brief periods of peace interspersing numerous wars.

<sup>22</sup> Philip V (r.221 – 179 BCE) was the penultimate ruler of Antigonid Macedon. Antiochus III the Great (r.222 – 187 BCE) was the sixth ruler of the Seleucid Empire. Ptolemy IV Philopator (r.221 – 204 BCE) was the fourth king of Ptolemaic Egypt.  
*N.B.* Ancient sources always distinguish Hellenistic rulers by their honourific epithets rather than by number (i.e. ‘Ptolemy Philopator’ rather than ‘Ptolemy IV’). The practice of numbering monarchs is anachronistic in the context of antiquity. Some modern authors have adopted the modern convention of distinguishing monarchs by number, whilst others prefer distinction by epithet in line with ancient sources. To avoid confusion, this study will name Hellenistic monarchs by both number and epithet wherever possible, so that names in both ancient and modern works cited are consistent with the names used here.

<sup>23</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* IV.2.5.

<sup>24</sup> The Achaean League was a confederation of city-states based in southern Greece, and the Aetolian League was another confederation based in western Greece.

showed themselves to be a liability, with their contribution to the war consisting of a series of defeats. As Polybius observed:

“The Achaean commanders... mismanaged matters to such an extent that it was impossible for anyone to have acted more stupidly.”<sup>25</sup>

Following the Social War, Philip allied with Hannibal, who had recently achieved another great victory against the Romans at Lake Trasimene. This alliance led Rome to fear Philip joining Hannibal in Italy, so they initiated the First Macedonian War to prevent Philip from doing so.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.3 The Fourth Syrian War (219 – 217 BCE)

The Fourth Syrian War resumed the rivalry between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms. The Seleucids dominated initially. Many Ptolemaic elites were not enthused by the abilities of their king, as suggested by the defection of Theodotos, Panaitolos, and others to the Seleucid camp during the war.<sup>27</sup> Capitalising on this internal instability, Antiochus swiftly captured Coele-Syria and Phoenicia. He paused for a year to consolidate his early gains,<sup>28</sup> before pushing into the Sinai in spring 217, thereby directly threatening the Ptolemaic heartland in Egypt. This made it apparent that Antiochus did not merely aim to restore Seleucid sovereignty over the historically disputed lands in Coele-Syria, as Ptolemy had expected.<sup>29</sup> Instead, the objective was total victory and the absorption of the Ptolemaic realm into the Seleucid Empire. Ptolemy therefore marched to Raphia to confront Antiochus.

Ptolemy achieved an unexpected victory at Raphia. The Fourth Syrian War had an outcome where both kings could claim victory: Ptolemy had repelled the invasion, secured

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<sup>25</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* IV.11.1.

<sup>26</sup> The First Macedonian War is not assessed due to its relative insignificance to the study's objectives; neither Rome nor Macedon committed large forces against each other and the war ended in *status quo antebellum*. It is significant only for the cause of its outbreak: for the first time, policy in the east was dictated by events in the west – Hannibal's rampage through Italy was sufficient to persuade Philip of Roman weakness and of an opportunity to attack.

<sup>27</sup> Theodotos had been the Ptolemaic commander of Phoenicia and Coele-Syria. He betrayed Ptolemy by defecting to Antiochus' camp, surrendering the cities of Tyre and Ptolemais in the process. Panaitolos was Theodotos' lieutenant and worked with him in aiding Antiochus. (John D. Grainger, *The Syrian Wars* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 199-200; cf. Polybius, *The Histories* V.40.1 – 3.) Heinen further describes an entire corps of Ptolemaic officers and troops defecting to join Antiochus. (H. Heinen, “The Syrian-Egyptian Wars and the new kingdoms of Asia Minor.” In *The Cambridge Ancient History. Volume VII Part I: The Hellenistic World*, ed. F.W. Walbank, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 436.)

<sup>28</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* V.66.5 – 7.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. V.67.2 – 8.

a famous victory, and recovered control of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, achievements for which the Egyptian priesthood fêted him. Antiochus was humbled but saved face by regaining the port of Seleucia Pieria.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, the Fourth Syrian War proved little more than a respite for the Ptolemies. Antiochus had not been conclusively neutralised, only repelled for the time being. He still had ample reserves and resources to pursue his interests against Egypt, but was distracted by developments along his eastern borders for the next fifteen years.

Victory in the Fourth Syrian War came at a great cost to the Ptolemies.<sup>31</sup> They normally used Greek troops, but were now forced to enlist 22,000 native Egyptians into the army, equipping and training them in the Macedonian fashion.<sup>32</sup> The *machimoi* formed half of the Ptolemaic phalanx that had played an indispensable role at Raphia.<sup>33</sup> Their excellent performance awakened the Egyptians to their military potential, which would be channelled into insurrections against the crown.<sup>34</sup> Native uprisings erupted in 207/6,<sup>35</sup> and quickly spiralled out of control. In this way, Ptolemaic power eroded from within.<sup>36</sup> The equilibrium between the Hellenistic dynasties consequently shattered.<sup>37</sup>

The state's decline accelerated with Ptolemy's death in 204 BCE. He was succeeded by his five-year-old son, Ptolemy V Epiphanes.<sup>38</sup> Due to his age, he was not up to the task of guiding the Ptolemaic kingdom through such a difficult time. The native revolt raged on in the hinterlands while the capital, Alexandria, descended into chaos under poor municipal administration. Antiochus and Philip saw an opportune moment to strike. They concluded a pact to take advantage of the unrest in the Ptolemaic kingdom.<sup>39</sup> According to its terms, Philip would target the Aegean, and Antiochus would attack Coele-Syria and Phoenicia.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Originally a Seleucid possession that was lost to the Ptolemies in the Third Syrian War.

<sup>31</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* V.107.1 – 3. Cf. Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 290-91.

<sup>32</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* V.63.9.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. V.86.1. Cf. John D. Grainger, *The Seleukid Empire of Antiochus III* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2015, Amazon Kindle eBook Edition), Location 863.

<sup>34</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* V.107.2 – 4.

<sup>35</sup> H. Heinen, "The Syrian-Egyptian Wars and the new kingdoms of Asia Minor." In *The Cambridge Ancient History. Volume VII Part I: The Hellenistic World*, ed. F.W. Walbank, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 438.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 291.

<sup>37</sup> Pierre Jouget, *Macedonian Imperialism and the Hellenization of the East*, trans. M.R. Dobie (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1928), 218.

<sup>38</sup> r.204 – 181 BCE.

<sup>39</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* XV.20.

<sup>40</sup> Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 304.

#### 4. The Fifth Syrian War and the Macedonian – Seleucid Pact (202 – 197 BCE)

The Seleucids defeated the Ptolemies in the Fifth Syrian War. The Ptolemaic state was considerably weakened by this point, as discussed above; moreover, their position was once again compromised by elite defection. On this occasion Ptolemaios, the governor of Coele-Syria, defected to the Seleucids and assisted their swift capture of the region.<sup>41</sup> By 201, Antiochus controlled the Levant entirely. His dominance was highlighted by the comprehensive victory secured at the battle of Panium in 200.<sup>42</sup>

The defeat at Panium demonstrated the powerlessness of the Ptolemies. The reduction of regional great powers from three to two had enormous significance.<sup>43</sup> Henceforth, the Ptolemies could no longer act as a counterbalance protecting minor Greek states from Antigonid and Seleucid aggression. Rome began to take notice of the matter as Athens, Pergamon, Rhodes and the Ptolemies each despatched diplomatic missions to the Senate between 201 - 200, pleading for Roman involvement in the crisis.<sup>44</sup>

Antiochus changed his focus and desisted from invading Egypt, opting instead to target Cilicia and Pamphylia.<sup>45</sup> Seleucid expansion in Asia heightened the concerns of Rhodes and Pergamon,<sup>46</sup> which in turn led to these states redoubling their efforts to gain Roman support. The Fifth Syrian War formally concluded in 195 with the marriage of the Seleucid princess Cleopatra to the now mature Ptolemy V Epiphanes. The betrothal effectively reduced the Ptolemaic state to a Seleucid client-state.<sup>47</sup>

Philip had also been active during the Ptolemaic collapse. He constructed a large fleet to attack Pergamon and Rhodes. Philip's ships raided numerous cities along the Aegean and Black Sea coastlines, and he reinvested the loot into expanding the fleet.<sup>48</sup> Finally, Philip captured Ptolemaic cities in Thrace and the Aegean, and his European

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 250-51.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 258-60.

<sup>43</sup> Arthur M. Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East: From Anarchy to Hierarchy in the Hellenistic Mediterranean, 230 – 170 BC* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 126.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>45</sup> See appendix below, map 3. Cilicia and Pamphylia are located on the southern Turkish coast, adjacent to Cyprus.

<sup>46</sup> R. Malcolm Errington, *A History of Macedonia*, trans. Catherine Errington (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 196-97. See appendix below, map 3; the Pergamene kingdom is rendered as "Attalids."

<sup>47</sup> Grainger, *The Syrian Wars*, 274.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 306.

successes further disconcerted the Attalids and Rhodians. The Rhodians found these acts of aggression intolerable and declared war on Philip.<sup>49</sup>

The systemic crisis forced the Attalids and Rhodians, historically rivals, to unite against the common threat. The alliance was significant as neither could resist Philip's navy alone; united, they repelled Philip in the battle of Chios in 201. When the Macedonians attempted advancing by land through Caria, the allied navies blockaded their fleet, stranding Philip in Asia Minor. Philip was almost starved into surrendering, but the Seleucid governor Zeuxis supplied the Macedonians, preventing their surrender.<sup>50</sup>

Though the Seleucids had saved Philip from starvation over the winter of 201, the blockade had not been lifted and he was still immobilized. The Rhodians and Attalids took the opportunity to present their case against the Macedonians to the Roman Senate. Their proposals were well-received. With Hannibal defeated and the Republic secure once again, the time had come to settle scores with Philip, who had aligned with Hannibal during the Second Punic War. Whilst discreetly mobilizing legions, Rome despatched envoy to Philip in 200, demanding for an immediate cessation of hostilities against its new Greek allies,<sup>51</sup> and for an end to aggression against Ptolemaic holdings.<sup>52</sup> The envoys were also tasked with issuing an ultimatum to Antiochus to desist from an Egyptian invasion.<sup>53</sup>

By summer 200, Philip evaded the blockade and returned to Macedonia. Predictably, he refused the Roman ultimatum as Hellenistic monarchs were more accustomed to issuing ultimatums than agreeing to them.<sup>54</sup> With its refusal, the Second Macedonian War broke out in 200.

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<sup>49</sup> Errington, *A History of Macedonia*, 196.

<sup>50</sup> Zeuxis was the Seleucid satrap over the province of Lydia (which bordered Caria) and a high-ranking general. He responded to Philip's appeal for aid by supplying wheat and corn provisions to the stranded Macedonians, presumably with royal sanction to do so. (Polybius, *The Histories* XVI.24.) The importance of Zeuxis' act is to provide evidence supporting the authenticity of the pact between Philip and Antiochus: had he not come to Philip's aid in this moment of desperation, the outcome would have been disastrous for the Macedonians.

<sup>51</sup> The new allies being the Aetolian League, Athens, the Attalids and Rhodes.

<sup>52</sup> Errington, *A History of Macedonia*, 200. Cf. Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 205-06.

<sup>53</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 206.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

## 5. The Second Macedonian War (200 – 197 BCE)

Between 200 and 198, the Macedonians comfortably resisted Roman invasion. The situation changed when T. Quinctius Flaminius became consul in 198 and assumed command of the campaign. En route to Macedonia, Flaminius took 3,000 hardened veterans who had served at Zama.<sup>55</sup> Their arrival sharply improved the quality of Rome's army, and alongside Flaminius' fresh strategic approach, the tide of the war begun to turn.

Philip professed a desire for peace after a minor defeat, to which Flaminius responded by declaring that Rome would accept peace provided that the Greeks were left to their own laws and all Macedonian armies in Greece were withdrawn.<sup>56</sup> Philip refused these terms and the war continued. The impact of these diplomatic exchanges was legitimising Rome as the protector of Greek freedom against Macedonian aggression;<sup>57</sup> subsequently most Greek states aligned with Rome. Flaminius, along with 6,400 troops supplied by the Aetolian League, met Philip's army at Cynoscephalae in 197.

The Romans defeated the Macedonians at Cynoscephalae. Philip's manpower proved insufficient to fulfil his grandiose ambitions. Rome could absorb defeats (as in 199 and 198) without difficulty, while a single major defeat inflicted unrecoverable losses on Philip. He was forced to sue for peace on Roman terms. The ensuing treaty stipulated that he was to withdraw from Greece altogether, and surrender his conquests in Thrace and Asia Minor. Additionally, Philip was to pay indemnities and disband his navy. The treaty was ratified in 196, formally concluding the war.

Flaminius proclaimed that freedom had been restored to the Greeks at the Isthmian Games of 196. He added that all Roman armies and garrisons in Greece would shortly withdraw; subsequently, the Greeks could administer their own affairs as per their pre-existing laws. Having outlined this bright future, Flaminius and Rome appeared as liberators freeing Greece from Macedonian tyranny, and the proclamation met with rapturous applause from the spectators.<sup>58</sup> Flaminius supported his rhetoric with action. Rome had completely withdrawn by 194, with not a single soldier or official left behind as

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<sup>55</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Flaminius* III.3.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. V.6.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. X.3 – 6.

promised. A letter he addressed to the city of Cyretia c.196 reveals the Roman commitment to protecting their image as the guarantors of Greek freedom.<sup>59</sup>

Flamininus' eagerness to present Rome in this manner stemmed in part from the historical significance of the slogan "freedom of the Greeks." As Ernst Badian summarised, Greek public opinion was a significant influence on Hellenistic kings. Monarchs used the pretext of "freeing" Greek cities to justify their conquests; the practice had been inaugurated by Alexander, who launched his great expedition on the pretext of freeing the Greek cities of Asia from Persian domination.<sup>60</sup> By proclaiming the freedom of the Greeks, Flamininus grasped the significance of adopting established Hellenistic methods for ensuring Rome's successful diplomatic entry into the Hellenistic world.<sup>61</sup> The strategy largely paid dividends and the Greeks viewed Flamininus' proclamation with sincerity. To support this conclusion, we have the reception of the spectators at the Isthmian Games, alongside contemporary literature demonstrating the favourable response in Greece.<sup>62</sup>

However, the Aetolian League was discontent. Having provided the largest Greek contribution to the war against Philip, the Aetolians resented their lack of territorial gains and those granted to their rivals the Achaeans.<sup>63</sup> The Aetolians began to foment anti-Roman sentiment in Greece, declaring that the Greeks were not free and had only exchanged Macedonian masters for Roman ones, and stating that the Greeks were mistaken in entrusting their liberty to Rome.<sup>64</sup>

## 6. The Roman – Seleucid War (192 – 189 BCE)

With Philip defeated, the Seleucids were the last Hellenistic great power in the Mediterranean. Antiochus completed his conquests in Asia Minor and crossed the Dardanelles in 196, entering Europe for the first time. Badian suggested that Antiochus

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<sup>59</sup> "Letter of Flamininus to Chyretiai." In *The Hellenistic Period: Historical Sources in Translation*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall and Peter Derow (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), 73-74. See appendix below, chapter 1 no. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Ernst Badian, "Rome and Antiochus the Great: A Study in Cold War," *Classical Philology* 54, no. 2 (April 1959): 89.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Alcaeus of Messene, *Anthologia Palatina* XVI.5: "Both Xerxes led a Persian host to the land of Hellas, and Titus [Flamininus], too, led there a host from broad Italy, but the one meant to set the yoke of slavery on the neck of Europe, the other to put an end to the servitude of Hellas."

<sup>63</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 288-89.

<sup>64</sup> Livy, *From the founding of the city* XXXIV.49.5 – 6.



chose to land in Europe since he knew that a confrontation with Rome loomed: it would be “much more difficult for the Romans to make him evacuate what he already held than to forbid him to go farther.”<sup>65</sup> Rome responded by drawing upon its image as the protector of Greek freedom. An embassy despatched in 196 demanded the Seleucids to withdraw from all Greek cities recently captured in Asia Minor.<sup>66</sup> The embassy also ordered Antiochus to stay out of Europe and especially Greece: “he was not to bring war and enslavement to kings into the Greek world just freed from them by Rome.”<sup>67</sup>

Antiochus assured Rome that there was no cause for concern; his European interests lay only in reclaiming Thrace, which had previously belonged to his family. He also declared that Asia was his sphere of influence just as Italy was Rome’s. This was an ingenious reply to Roman allegations that he was a tyrant who violated Greek liberty. Just as Asia’s Greek cities were dominated by the Seleucids, Italy’s Greek cities were dominated by Rome; their subordination was clearly at odds with Rome’s image of protecting Greek freedom. Antiochus had thus neatly reversed the situation. He could continue occupying Thrace and retain control over his conquests at no cost to his reputation, whilst Rome could only prevent this by attacking him, in which case their image of protecting Greek freedom would disappear.<sup>68</sup>

This ‘cold war’ dragged on for another four years, with each side eager to portray itself as the true champion of Greek freedom. Tensions were heightened in 195 when Hannibal, having fled Carthage upon Roman demands for his extradition, arrived at Antiochus’ court seeking asylum. Antiochus appointed him as a military advisor, and Hannibal’s presence raised Roman suspicions about Seleucid intentions.<sup>69</sup> After the second round of talks between the Senate and Seleucid envoys in 193, the peace became increasingly fragile. Neither side wanted war, but their mutual suspicion inexorably drove them towards conflict.<sup>70</sup>

On their journey home, the Seleucid envoys stopped in Greece and contacted the Aetolian League. The possibility of Seleucid support in a war against Rome led the Aetolians to attempt forming an anti-Roman coalition with Sparta and Macedon. Philip

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<sup>65</sup> Badian, “Rome and Antiochus the Great,” 84-85.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>67</sup> Badian, “Rome and Antiochus the Great,” 85. Cf. Polybius, *The Histories* XVIII.47.1 – 2.

<sup>68</sup> Badian, “Rome and Antiochus the Great,” 85-87, 90.

<sup>69</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 218.

<sup>70</sup> Badian, “Rome and Antiochus the Great,” 92.

declined, however the Spartan king Nabis joined the Aetolians. Nabis had captured cities that Rome had awarded to the Achaean League in the post-war settlement. In so doing, he violated the Greek freedom that Rome had guaranteed. Therefore, Nabis knew that he had made an enemy in common with the Aetolians and Antiochus.<sup>71</sup>

The Achaeans declared war on Sparta and “utterly routed” Nabis’ army.<sup>72</sup> After this defeat, Nabis appealed to the Aetolians for aid, and they responded by plotting to betray him and seize Sparta. They murdered Nabis outside the city but failed to take it, and in the ensuing chaos it was in fact the Achaeans who took Sparta.<sup>73</sup> The Achaeans then declared war on the Seleucids and Aetolians, which drew in their Roman allies.<sup>74</sup> The Roman – Seleucid War thus began in 192.

The Aetolians meanwhile approached Antiochus and urged him to invade Greece. They promised their support, exaggerated their military capability, and further claimed that they had formed the anti-Roman coalition.<sup>75</sup> These factors explain why Antiochus moved so rapidly into Greece with an army of only 10,000. Hannibal advised him of the foolishness of the campaign, remarking that the Aetolians were unreliable and that neither the Spartans nor Macedonians had shown any signs of support (Philip would in fact ally with Rome). Hannibal further urged Antiochus to summon an army from Asia immediately, so that he would not have to depend on these dubious allies. Antiochus ignored this sound counsel and pressed on regardless.<sup>76</sup> This proved an enormous mistake. In the battle at Thermopylae in 191, the Seleucid defeat was attributable to their small army and to the failure of their Aetolian allies. The 10,000 Seleucids held firmly against the Romans, but when they saw the Aetolians retreating, they panicked and fled.<sup>77</sup> The Seleucid army was annihilated in the pursuit. Thermopylae was a disaster for Antiochus, and he fled to Asia in the aftermath.

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<sup>71</sup> Sviatoslav Dmitriev, *The Greek Slogan of Freedom and Early Roman Politics in Greece* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 209. Cf. Livy, *From the founding of the city* XXXV.13.1 – 2.

<sup>72</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Philopoemen* XIV.5 – 7.

<sup>73</sup> Dmitriev, *The Greek Slogan of Freedom*, 209.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Appian of Alexandria, *The Syrian Wars* III.12.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., III.14.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. IV.17 – 20. Cf. Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *The Seleucid Army: Organisation and Tactics in the Great Campaigns* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 9th edition reprint), 162.

A Roman army commanded by L. Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus entered Asia in 190.<sup>78</sup> They were supplemented by a Greek force commanded by Eumenes II Soter.<sup>79</sup> The engagement took place at Magnesia that year. Eumenes' Greeks stationed on the right flank played the decisive role in the Roman victory. The Seleucid army crumbled from the pressure applied on its left flank by Eumenes' forces, and the Romans celebrated victory.<sup>80</sup> Antiochus survived the battle and sued for peace after escaping to Sardis.

The war thus ended in a clear Roman victory. The peace settlement was ratified in 188. By its terms, Antiochus was to withdraw to the eastern side of the Taurus mountains, thereby stripping the empire of all the conquests made in Asia Minor; additionally, all Seleucid war elephants were surrendered, and the navy was restricted to a maximum of twelve ships. Antiochus was to pay indemnities annually for twelve years.<sup>81</sup> The Attalids and Rhodians were the major beneficiaries of the territorial changes from the treaty.<sup>82</sup>

The treaty drastically reduced Seleucid power. Antiochus died shortly after in 187; with his death and with the harsh peace settlement, the Seleucids would never recapture their former might. Rome withdrew from the east and would not return for a generation. The anarchy in the Mediterranean gave way to a hierarchy with Rome at the head of a coalition of newly empowered allied states. Their involvement in the east had been ultimately caused by the crisis triggered by Ptolemaic collapse and the subsequent Macedonian – Seleucid aggression.

## 7. The Third Macedonian War and Roman hegemony (172 – 168 BCE)

Roman power had vastly increased in the period from 219 to 188, but the power of its allies had also grown. Pergamon and Rhodes enjoyed rapid growth, the Achaean League had also been well rewarded for collaborating with Rome, and even Macedon benefitted from the Roman – Seleucid War. Despite a major power shift in Rome's favour, the Greek states dealt with Rome as equals and not subordinates. Roman unipolarity from

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<sup>78</sup> Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus (henceforth 'Scipio Asiaticus') was consul in 190 BCE. He commanded in the war against Antiochus and was accompanied on campaign by his brother Scipio Africanus.

<sup>79</sup> Eumenes II Soter (r. 197 – 159 BCE) was the fourth king of the Attalid dynasty to rule Pergamon.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 171.

<sup>81</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* **XXI**.42

<sup>82</sup> See below appendix, Chapter 1 no.2.

188 – 171 did not create Roman hegemony, and thus did not completely resolve the pressures of the anarchic state-system.

Macedon begun a resurgence during this period. Philip proved an adept peace-time ruler and he remobilized effectively.<sup>83</sup> The rebuilding was aided by Rome's relaxation of the conditions imposed after the Second Macedonian War, in recognition of Philip's contribution against Antiochus. Philip begun campaigning in Thrace prior to his death in 179; since Thrace had no diplomatic contact with Rome, he was not censured. Also, his son Demetrius had made some friends in Rome during his captivity; when Greek states complained to the Senate about Philip's actions, Demetrius' popularity in Rome exonerated Philip.<sup>84</sup> Demetrius was executed shortly after on suspicions of treason and collusion with the Romans.<sup>85</sup> Despite remobilizing and expanding, Philip was not preparing for another war against Rome. He complied with every demand the Senate made of him and did not commit any act of provocation.<sup>86</sup> He was succeeded by his remaining son, Perseus,<sup>87</sup> who, according to Nicholas G.L. Hammond and F.W. Walbank, was bequeathed a "reconstituted and powerful kingdom" through Philip's post-war reforms and expansion.<sup>88</sup>

Perseus' first interaction with Rome was to seek affirmation of his succession and obtain a renewal of the *amicitia* that Philip had reached,<sup>89</sup> which the Senate ratified. In 178 he married Laodice while his sister married the Bithynian king Prusias.<sup>90</sup> As the strategic nature of these weddings suggests, Perseus' chief aim was to improve relations between Macedon and other Greek states.<sup>91</sup> Perseus undermined Greek support for Rome by presenting himself as the champion of the impoverished, contrasting himself against Rome

<sup>83</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Aemilius Paulus* VII.5., VIII.5 – 8.

<sup>84</sup> Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* XXXII.2.3 – 5.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. XXXII.2.8 – 10.

<sup>86</sup> Nicholas G.L. Hammond & F.W. Walbank, *A History of Macedonia, Volume III: 336 – 168 BCE* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 490.

<sup>87</sup> Perseus (r.179-168 BCE) was the final member of the Antigonid dynasty to rule Macedon.

<sup>88</sup> Hammond & Walbank, *A History of Macedonia*, 486.

<sup>89</sup> 'Friendship.' To be *amicitiae* with Rome was to be a 'friend of Rome.' Gruen characterised the relationship as being a "euphemism for clientship" by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. (Erich S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome, Volume I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 54.)

<sup>90</sup> Laodice was the daughter of Seleucus IV Philopator (r.187-175 BCE), who was the seventh ruler of the Seleucid Empire. Prusias II Cynegus (r.182 – 149 BCE) was the fifth Hellenistic monarch of Bithynia, a minor state in northern Turkey (See appendix below, map 3).

<sup>91</sup> Perseus also sought to improve relations by permitting exiled Macedonians living in Greek states to return home, granting them amnesty from prosecution and annulling their outstanding debts. This solved the problem of Macedonian refugees for the concerned Greek states. (Errington, *A History of Macedonia*, 212-13.)

which had always represented elite Greek interests.<sup>92</sup> But like Philip, Perseus showed no outward signs of aggression towards Rome.

The normalization of relationships between Macedon and other Greek states was perceived as a threat by Eumenes of Pergamon. The marriage between Perseus and Laodice stoked fears of a renewed Macedonian – Seleucid alliance, and Eumenes was already at war with Prusias of Bithynia, Perseus' brother-in-law.<sup>93</sup> Eumenes denounced Perseus to the Senate in 173/72, painting his every act as hostile to Rome and arguing that he was preparing for war.<sup>94</sup> The Senate was already concerned that Perseus was beginning to erode Rome's status as the guarantor of Greek freedom,<sup>95</sup> and Eumenes' accusations provided further justification for an intervention. Rome declared war on Macedon in 171 citing these reasons.

The Macedonians resisted Roman armies for three years. Perseus secured an early victory at the battle of Callinicus in 171, and in 170 his fleet destroyed a Roman fleet in the Aegean. These successes kept the Roman advance at a standstill, and they earned the support of many Greeks.<sup>96</sup> But Perseus failed to seize the opportunities that his early successes created. Ancient sources unanimously agree that this was due to a major flaw in Perseus' character: he was notoriously miserly,<sup>97</sup> and would not sanction the expenses necessary to wage war.

In 168, the new consul L. Aemilius Paullus assumed command of the Roman campaign,<sup>98</sup> and his presence transformed the campaign. The belligerents met in the decisive battle at Pydna, where the Romans achieved a brutal and decisive victory.<sup>99</sup> The Third Macedonian War ended with the disestablishment of the Antigonid dynasty, as Perseus and his family were paraded through Rome in chains during Aemilius' triumph. The kingdom was partitioned into four republics, and each republic was forbidden from having any kind of intercourse with another. Each republic paid half its taxes directly to

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<sup>92</sup> Hammond & Walbank, *A History of Macedonia*, 493-94.

<sup>93</sup> Errington, *A History of Macedonia*, 213.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 214. The specific charges Eumenes levelled at Perseus are listed in Hammond & Walbank, *A History of Macedonia*, 500-01.

<sup>95</sup> Hammond & Walbank, *A History of Macedonia*, 497.

<sup>96</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* XXVII.9 – 10.

<sup>97</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Aemilius Paulus* VIII.10, IX.1, XII.3 – 12, XIII.1 – 4. Cf. Livy, *From the founding of the city* XLIV.23, 26.1 – 2, 27.1, 27.8, 27.12.; and Polybius, *The Histories* XXIX.8.4, 9.1, 9.7, 9.12.

<sup>98</sup> Lucius Aemilius Paullus (henceforth referred to as Aemilius) was a two-time consul, and he won the honorific 'Macedonicus' following his defeat of Perseus.

<sup>99</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Aemilius* XX – XXII.

Rome. As R. Malcolm Errington concluded, the Third Macedonian War “spelled the irrevocable end of Macedonia as a state... the Macedonians had become subjects of Rome.”<sup>100</sup>

Roman hegemony in the Mediterranean was underlined by a diplomatic incident in 168 shortly after Pydna. Antiochus IV Epiphanes invaded Egypt in the Sixth Syrian War and stood poised to capture Alexandria.<sup>101</sup> The Ptolemies sent to Rome for help, and the Senate responded by despatching G. Popilius Laenas to Egypt,<sup>102</sup> bearing a demand for Antiochus to cease hostilities and withdraw immediately. When he saw the envoys approaching, Antiochus greeted them and extended his hand; Laenas responded coldly and refused to shake it. He instructed Antiochus to read the Senate’s decree. Upon reading its contents, Antiochus requested for time to discuss his options with his counsel. Laenas picked up a stick and drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus, ordering him to give his answer before leaving the circle, or be considered an enemy of Rome. After a pause, Antiochus agreed to the demands and withdrew on the appointed date. Livy and Polybius both emphasized the audacity of the demand and the degrading way that it was delivered to Antiochus.<sup>103</sup> The incident symbolised Rome’s preponderance in the Hellenistic world.

This chapter charted the growth of Roman power from 280 to 168, describing the key events that led to Roman hegemony. In the next chapter, we will investigate the extent to which militaristic cultural attitudes in Roman society influenced the growth of Roman power.

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<sup>100</sup> Errington, *A History of Macedonia*, 216-17.

<sup>101</sup> Antiochus IV Epiphanes (r.175 – 164 BCE) was the eighth Seleucid king.

<sup>102</sup> Gaius Popilius Laenas was a two-time consul.

<sup>103</sup> Livy, *From the founding of the city* **XLV**.12.; cf. Polybius, *The Histories* **XXIX**.27. He writes that the victory at Pydna forced Antiochus’ hand, without which he would “never have obeyed the Roman behests.”

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# CHAPTER II

## MILITARISM IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

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## 1. Introduction

The leading view in contemporary scholarship on Roman imperialism holds that the exceptionally militaristic nature of Roman society fundamentally caused and explains the advent of Roman hegemony. The seminal work in this regard is William Harris' *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*. The argument is that militaristic attitudes were more intensely embedded in the fabric of Roman society compared to rival states in the Mediterranean; this was the critical variable enabling Roman hegemony. In other words, Rome is described as an exceptionally militaristic state.

The study defines the phrase 'exceptionally militaristic' as follows:

1. Roman soldiers were exceptionally brutal.
2. Roman citizens had exceptionally positive attitudes towards warfare.
3. Rome's political system rewarded military achievement to an exceptional degree.

The purpose of this chapter is to critique Roman exceptionalism by analysing these definitions. It argues that Roman society was not exceptionally militarized. It does not dispute the claim that Rome was a highly militarized society – that is entirely true. However, there are significant problems present in the exceptionalist interpretation of Roman imperialism. As Eckstein argued, militaristic attitudes were not only normal in the Mediterranean but also in northern Europe, India and China.<sup>1</sup> If militarism was normal, then Rome cannot be described as 'exceptionally' militaristic; therefore, Rome's imperial motivations cannot be exclusively ascribed to militaristic cultural attitudes. The goal of this chapter is to critique Roman exceptionalism by showing that intense militarism was a normative social, cultural, and political feature of ancient Mediterranean states.

## 2. Operations

Since antiquity, historians have argued that operational superiority played a crucial role in the establishment of Roman hegemony over the Mediterranean. Typically, ancient

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur M. Eckstein, "Bellicosity and Anarchy: Soldiers, Warriors, and Combat in Antiquity." *The International History Review* 27, no.3 (2005): 496-97.



analyses focused on tactics. Historians explained Roman battlefield success by contrasting the tactical advantages of the manipular legion over the Macedonian phalanx.<sup>2</sup> Some current scholarship has followed this precedent. For instance, Kenneth Harl argued that the advent of Roman hegemony was intrinsically linked to the status of the Roman legion as the “arbiter” of ancient battles.<sup>3</sup> However, this line of investigation is better suited to understanding why Roman armies were successful. It is not significant to understanding the causes of Roman imperialism.

Whilst tactical considerations are not ignored by exceptionalist arguments,<sup>4</sup> the chief claim made in this regard links the extreme violence displayed by Roman soldiers to the success of Roman imperialism. For Harris, one powerful manifestation of Rome’s exceptional militarism was the viciousness routinely exhibited by Roman soldiers.<sup>5</sup> He contends that this contributed to the growth of Roman power in two ways: firstly, their brutality struck fear into Hellenistic armies and thereby sapped their will to resist in battle;<sup>6</sup> secondly, they terrorized enemies and discouraged revolts against Roman rule through “indiscriminately killing” the inhabitants of captured cities.<sup>7</sup> We now assess these claims through examining the nature of the Roman army and comparing with Hellenistic armies.

## 2.1 The Roman army

Rome’s military forces consisted of two consular armies at a minimum, each placed under the command of the two consuls holding office for the year. Consular armies consisted of two legions and a full contingent of *Socii*.<sup>8</sup> During the mid-Republican period, this amounted to 10,000 Roman infantry and 600 *equites*,<sup>9</sup> plus the *Socii* levy requiring allied commitment of an equal number of infantry and triple the cavalry. In total a consular army consisted of 20,000 infantry and 2,400 cavalry, of which allies provided 10,000 foot

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<sup>2</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* XVIII.28 – 32.; Plutarch, *Life of Flamininus* VIII.4 – 5.; Livy, *From the founding of the city* XXXIII.4.3., XXXIII.9.5 – 9., XXXIII.18.17 – 18.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth W. Harl, “Legion over Phalanx: the Battle of Magnesia, 190 B.C.” In *Macedonian Legacies: Studies in Ancient Macedonian History and Culture in Honor of Eugene N. Borza*, eds. T. Howe & J. Reames (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace, 2008), 274.

<sup>4</sup> Nathan Rosenstein, “Republican Rome,” 202-05.

<sup>5</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 51-53.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 52: “The legionaries’ actions in battle struck fear into even the best Hellenistic army... the Macedonians... were frightened at the prospect of fighting against such weapons and such men.”

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>8</sup> The *Socii* were troops contributed by Rome’s Italic allies & client states.

<sup>9</sup> *Equites* were wealthy Roman citizens who served as horsemen.

and 1,800 horse.<sup>10</sup> Rome usually fielded several consular armies with the identical ratio of allied troops to Roman troops. Ex-consuls retained their command over consular armies as *proconsuls*,<sup>11</sup> so that Rome could fight on multiple fronts.

Mathematics shows that any link between the Roman cultural disposition towards violence and Roman battlefield success is tenuous. Roman power plainly did not lie in its own military capacity, given that only a quarter of cavalry and half the infantry fielded by Roman armies consisted of Roman citizens. Therefore, the link between Roman culture and imperialism is dubious. 53% of any given consular army was composed of non-Romans,<sup>12</sup> so the majority were not subjected to Roman culture.

As Rome began expanding beyond Italy after 240 BCE, allied troops hailing from all over the Mediterranean were attached to consular armies. By the time of the Roman – Seleucid War, Roman armies included troops sourced from as far afield as Iberia and Numidia in the west, to Macedonia, Thrace, and Greece in the east.<sup>13</sup> As such, atrocities committed by Roman armies in captured cities show that violent cultural dispositions were widespread. Violence could not possibly have been a uniquely Roman or even uniquely Italian trait, or we could expect to see progressively fewer examples of brutality in correlation to the increasing diversification of Roman armies. However, this was not the case. Ancient armies, regardless of their origin, had no qualms about committing genocidal acts when sacking cities.<sup>14</sup> Having identified this problem in the exceptionalist argument, we can turn to historical evidence supporting the premise regarding the widespread nature of military viciousness.

## 2.2 Ancient sources and Roman exceptionalism

Harris, following Livy, claimed that Roman soldiers terrified even the most professionalized enemy armies;<sup>15</sup> and following Polybius, he declared that Roman armies behaved more violently than Hellenistic armies, citing the Roman sacking of New

<sup>10</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* VI.26.7.

<sup>11</sup> Literally, ‘for the consul.’ Proconsuls were ex-consuls who commanded on behalf of sitting consuls.

<sup>12</sup> 11,800 *Socii* from the total of 22,400 soldiers yields a percentage of 52.67.

<sup>13</sup> Polybius (*The Histories*, XV.5.12 – 13; XI.22.1 – 7.) records the presence of Numidian (north African) cavalry in Scipio Africanus’ victory over Hannibal at the battle of Zama, and the presence of Iberian (Spanish) infantry in the Roman victory at the battle of Ilipa. Livy (*From the founding of the city*, XXXVII.39.7 – 13.) and Appian (*The Syrian Wars*, VI.31.) record the presence of Greeks, Macedonians and Thracians in the Roman victory at the battle of Magnesia.

<sup>14</sup> Ben Kiernan, “The First Genocide: Carthage, 146 BC.” *Diogenes* 51, no. 3 (2004): 27-39. Kiernan argued that the Roman acts in sacking cities satisfy modern definitions of genocide.

<sup>15</sup> Supra, no. 5. Cf. Livy, *From the founding of the city*, XXXI.34.4 – 5.

Carthage as an example.<sup>16</sup> This section demonstrates that the Romans were not exceptionally brutal in either respect by examining the passages Harris cited.

Harris misinterpreted Livy's account of the "panic" and "fear" that gripped Philip V and the Macedonians.<sup>17</sup> He effectively claimed that Romans soldiers alone used fearsome weapons. However, the fear Roman soldiers struck into their enemies was through use of the "Spanish sword" (*gladius Hispaniensis*), which inflicted the grievous and terrifying wounds Livy referred to.<sup>18</sup> Livy's identification of the sword as Spanish shows that Harris misused the passage. The fact that the weapon was of Spanish and not Roman origin indicates that military violence was not a uniquely Roman trait; as Eckstein argued "the Romans had copied this weapon from the fearsome enemies they themselves had long fought."<sup>19</sup> The Romans themselves had suffered terrible wounds from this weapon before adopting it, so the assumption that the sword reflects *exceptionally* Roman brutality is false.

Moreover, Roman soldiers and commanders were not immune to being intimidated and terrified by the prospect of facing their enemies. Errington argued that the "innate Roman brutality" exhibited by the legions helped them defeat the Macedonians.<sup>20</sup> But in Polybius' estimation, the Macedonians were the most ferocious and warlike people, "joying in war as if it were a feast."<sup>21</sup> A good example is the battle of Pydna. Polybius and Plutarch recorded the Roman commander's<sup>22</sup> fearful reaction to the sight of the Macedonian phalanx.<sup>23</sup> His trepidation towards facing them was based on their weapons, making this instance perfectly analogous to Livy's description of Philip's distress at the thought of fighting the Romans. Plutarch emphasized the effect that the "long spears" and "interlocked shields" of the Macedonians had on the Romans.<sup>24</sup> Just as the *gladius*

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<sup>16</sup> Supra, no. 5. Cf. Polybius, *The Histories*, X.15.4 – 9.

<sup>17</sup> Livy (*From the founding of the city*, XXXI.34.4 – 5.) described these emotional responses on the part of Philip and the Macedonians upon burying the mutilated bodies of their countrymen who had fallen in battle against the Romans.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 201.

<sup>20</sup> Errington, *A History of Macedonia*, 214.

<sup>21</sup> Polybius, *The Histories*, V.2.4 – 6.

<sup>22</sup> L. Aemilius Paulus Macedonicus, discussed above chapter 1, section 7.

<sup>23</sup> See appendix, chapter 2 nos. 1, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

*Hispaniensis* intimidated the Macedonian king, so too did the *sarissa* frighten the Roman consul.<sup>25</sup>

Ancient armies were deliberately equipped for psychological warfare as much as they were for physical combat. Roman attempts in this regard were quite amateur compared against the choreographed battle rituals practiced by other cultures. For instance, Celtic tribesmen are known to have fought entirely naked, accompanied by a “dreadful din” of horns, trumpets and war-cries; their sight and sound in battle “terrified” and “dismayed” the Romans.<sup>26</sup> Parthian horsemen entered battle covering the thick armour worn by their mounts with rags, unveiling them before an engagement so that their enemies would be blinded by the sunlight reflecting off polished steel. The Parthians also slung large drums over their horses, which were beaten ferociously ahead of cataphract charges to terrify enemies. The impact of their dazzling armour and ritualised drum-beating struck fear into the Romans.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, there was nothing unusual or remarkable about an army being intimidated by the armaments and rituals of another. Fear and intimidation were not uniquely Roman operational characteristics. Instead they were a conventional strategy in ancient warfare. A Roman army was just as vulnerable to being intimidated as any other.<sup>28</sup> Exceptionalist analyses drawing on Livy’s passage collapse since the weapon was not of Roman origin, and because intimidation was a standard tactic in ancient warfare.

Polybius’ account of the sack of New Carthage in 209 is frequently cited as an example of exceptional Roman violence.<sup>29</sup> In this passage, he described how the Romans systematically sacked the city, and added that they slaughtered all living things found

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<sup>25</sup> The *sarissa* was a spear measuring up to 24 feet in length. The *sarissa* was the hallmark of the Macedonian phalanx, and unlike the Roman *gladius Hispaniensis*, it was a distinctly Macedonian innovation. (Christopher A. Mathew, *An Invincible Beast: Understanding the Hellenistic Pike Phalanx in Action* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2016, Amazon Kindle eBook edition), Location 1612.)

<sup>26</sup> Polybius, *The Histories*, II.29.5 – 9.: “The Romans... were terrified by the fine order of the Celtic host and the dreadful din... Very terrifying too were the appearances and gestures of the naked warriors in front... the sight of them indeed dismayed the Romans.”

<sup>27</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Crassus*, XXIII.6 – 7., XXIV.1 – 2., XXVI.3 – 5. The adjectives Plutarch used to describe Roman reactions to the Parthian displays are revealing: “shuddering and trembling”; “shattered and unstrung”; “fearful”; “terrifying”; “in consternation,” etc.

<sup>28</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 202.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 203. Cf. Polybius, *The Histories*, X.15 – 17.

inside. Harris cited the passage to argue that Romans were more violent than Greeks.<sup>30</sup> His claim hinges on the view that Polybius stressed the brutality of the sack.

But Polybius was not particularly interested in Roman brutality. That they slaughtered all living things was just a curious footnote; the real thrust of Polybius' analysis lies in his astonishment at the organisation of the sacking, not on its brutal violence.<sup>31</sup> This is shown by his dedication of two chapters to narrating the systematic fashion in which the Romans plundered New Carthage. For comparison, Polybius only dedicated five sections within a sole chapter to describing Roman viciousness.<sup>32</sup> That organisation merited a far lengthier discussion than brutality suggests that Polybius was highlighting organisation as the unusual Roman trait, not violence.<sup>33</sup>

Polybius stressed the importance of Roman organization through his comparison with Hellenistic practices in similar situations. The Romans equally distributed all the proceeds from looting cities.<sup>34</sup> This meant that soldiers did not break rank to secure personal spoils and followed all orders, confident that they would receive their fair share;<sup>35</sup> therefore, an army could be divided into groups of guards and looters,<sup>36</sup> and the city could be sacked safely. Hellenistic armies conversely were undisciplined in looting cities; every man was for himself.<sup>37</sup> This made it difficult to control the army. Without the systematic and organised Roman approach, Hellenistic armies had “not only been driven out [of a captured city] but met with complete disaster.”<sup>38</sup>

Polybius concluded his analysis with a recommendation for Greek commanders to adopt the organised Roman model.<sup>39</sup> He had nothing to say about brutality and violence in this advice. The most important lesson to take from Roman conduct was that plundering should be organised. Thus, exceptionalist interpretations of the Polybian passage are mistaken. It does not show that he was impressed or shocked by the violence of the

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<sup>30</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 51.

<sup>31</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* X.16 – 17. Cf. Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 204.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., X.15.4 – 8.

<sup>33</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 204-05.

<sup>34</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* X.16.4 – 6.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., X.16.8 – 9.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., X.17.1.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., X.17.3 – 4.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., X.17.5.

Romans. Rather, he was most interested in their organisation. The passage also implies that soldierly brutality was a normal feature of ancient life.

### 3. Popular attitudes to war

In Roman exceptionalism, popular attitudes are taken as an example of the “unusually belligerent” nature of Roman society.<sup>40</sup> Proponents assert that violent attitudes were among the main factors that drove Roman expansion. The claim is not only that the Roman people accepted warfare as natural, but that their acceptance and espousal of militaristic attitudes was greater than in contemporaneous societies. As Harris phrased it, the question is “how bellicose... were ordinary Roman citizens?”<sup>41</sup>

Historians have analysed Roman bellicosity in connection to imperialism by assessing and interpreting Roman armies from the perspective of the soldier, as an ordinary citizen, rather than the general as an elite. Issues such as discipline and systems for punishment and reward dominate this approach.<sup>42</sup> Another approach to gain insights into popular attitudes is analysing plays, poetry, religious traditions, customs and festivals, etc. Exceptionalist arguments can be contextualised by applying these same parameters to analysing popular attitudes to warfare in the broader Mediterranean region. When Hellenistic attitudes are considered, it becomes evident that militarism deeply influenced all Mediterranean cultures. The study therefore argues that Roman popular attitudes were by no means exceptional.

#### 3.1 Roman popular attitudes

Polybius’ description of the Roman military’s organisational structure has been highly influential. As in most cases, he is an authoritative and reliable source on the subject.<sup>43</sup> Polybius commented approvingly on the rigorous Roman systems for managing troops. Drawing upon his own military experience, he contrasted Roman methods favourably with the undisciplined and haphazard nature of Hellenistic armies.

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<sup>40</sup> Supra, no 5.

<sup>41</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 42. Cf. Rachel F. Vishnia, *State, Society and Popular Leaders in Mid-Republican Rome 214 – 167 BC* (London: Routledge, 1996), 150-53; also Errington, *A History of Macedonia*, 214, on the “innate Roman brutality” exhibited by legionaries.

<sup>42</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 43.

<sup>43</sup> See above, introduction no.2.

Contemporary scholars such as Harris extend Polybius' description and declare that these organisational features of Roman armies suggest favourable popular attitudes to warfare.<sup>44</sup>

Polybius meticulously recorded the organisational structure of Rome's armies. He compiled an exhaustive list of Roman methods, concluding:

“Considering all this attention given to the matter of punishments and rewards in the army and the importance attached to both, no wonder that the wars in which the Romans engage end so successfully and brilliantly.”<sup>45</sup>

He further stated that Romans were organisationally superior to Greeks, especially in the construction of encampments.<sup>46</sup> Justin corroborated Polybius through his evaluation of the lax disciplinary standards of the Seleucid army under Antiochus VII Euergetes.<sup>47</sup> His description of the luxuriousness of Seleucid armies draws a sharp contrast against the severity of Roman soldierly life.<sup>48</sup> In a Roman army, death sentences were mandated for even the smallest individual infringements of military law,<sup>49</sup> while collective failure was punished by decimation.<sup>50</sup> Punishment was publicly administered. One common penalty involved an offender being beaten and stoned by all his fellow soldiers in camp. If he managed to survive this ordeal, the offender would be outcast from the army,<sup>51</sup> being forced outside the camp in enemy territory with no way to return home, this was effectively a death sentence.

Based on the ancient sources, it is reasonable to conclude that Roman organisational systems far outstripped Hellenistic equivalents. Their standardised fortified encampments created an environment where soldiers could always feel comfortable in the camp's familiar surroundings. The punishment system dissuaded Roman soldiers from disobedience and breaking discipline, and the reward system motivated them to strive for excellence.<sup>52</sup> However, this information tells us nothing about popular attitudes to warfare.

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<sup>44</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 42-43.

<sup>45</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* VI.39.11. For the complete analysis, refer to VI.33. – 42. Again, Polybius' comments here suggest that he was most impressed by Roman organisation, not Roman militarism.

<sup>46</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* VI.42.1 – 5. See appendix, chapter 2 no. 3.

<sup>47</sup> r.138-129 BCE. Antiochus Euergetes was the 15<sup>th</sup> Seleucid king.

<sup>48</sup> Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* XXXVIII.10.1 – 4. See appendix, chapter 2 no. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* VI.36-37.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., VI.38.; see VI.38.2. for the origin of the term 'decimation', where one-tenth of the soldiers in an offending maniple were summarily executed at random as the penalty for the maniple's collective failure.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., VI.37.2 – 4.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., VI.37.6.; VI.38.4.; VI.39.1., 9 – 11.

Rather, it informs us only about a Roman's experience once he had already been conscripted and conditioned to the rigours of military life. Whilst the suggestion that Roman armies were exceptionally well-organised and disciplined is acceptable, Harris' suggestion that citizens who had not served in the military were eager for the chance to serve is not supported by the evidence.<sup>53</sup> His view is countered by Rachel Vishnia.

Vishnia documented the prevalence of draft-dodging amongst Roman citizens, and particularly noted how it reached epidemic proportions during the Second Punic War.<sup>54</sup> Young men routinely attempted to evade conscription. The phenomenon was especially prevalent amongst the sons of the elite, who would have served as *equites*. Vishnia concluded that a "dichotomy between the magistrates' ambition for *gloria rei militaris* and the people's will to fight for its satisfaction" developed over the course of Rome's expansion.<sup>55</sup> When this is considered, the best interpretation is that Roman citizens were fully aware of the extremely severe standards of discipline and punishment in Roman armies; and far from encouraging citizens to enlist, the thought of being subjected to such brutality had the opposite effect by contributing towards a phenomenon of draft-dodging.<sup>56</sup>

Harris does not adequately account for the presence of draft-dodging.<sup>57</sup> He dismissed draft-dodging by claiming it developed only after Rome had established its preponderance over the Mediterranean (i.e. after 168), and evaded analysis of the issue by stating that the bulk of his work focused on the period preceding 168. However, Vishnia has shown that draft-dodging was prevalent decades before 168, and Harris' failure to address it weakens his argument. The claim that Roman citizens were exceptionally militaristic is made questionable by their draft-dodging.

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<sup>53</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 46: "Historians should resist the presupposition that the citizens were generally reluctant to serve."

<sup>54</sup> Vishnia, *State, Society and Popular Leaders*, 150-51.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 150. '*Gloria rei militaris*' refers to the acclaim arising from military dominance; that is, the value of conquest for accumulating political capital.

<sup>56</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* XXXV.4. Polybius described the "extraordinary panic," "cowardice" and "shameless conduct" of draft-dodging Roman youths, indicating that fear was their primary motive to evade service. This gives credibility to the notion that the unreasonable expectations and harsh discipline Roman soldiers were subjected to contributed to the unwillingness of young men to comply with conscription. Moreover, it demonstrates that militaristic attitudes were by no means entrenched in the outlook of civilians.

<sup>57</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 45-50.



Literary works of the period often expressed anti-militaristic sentiments. Cloud argued that these themes suggest a counter-culture.<sup>58</sup> His suggestion of a counter-culture implies that militaristic attitudes were an entrenched societal norm that poets and playwrights sought to subvert with their literature. Harris similarly maintained that despite the thematic focus on anti-militarism, the fact that poets and playwrights often chose military matters as the setting for their works suggested that their audiences were “preoccupied with war.”<sup>59</sup> For Harris, analysis of literary sources therefore yields a vindication of the importance of war and militarism to shaping popular attitudes.

Plautus’ play *Miles Gloriosus* is among the most salient examples of mid-Republican war literature.<sup>60</sup> *Miles Gloriosus* has been dated to around 205 BCE, at the time where Roman fortunes in the struggle against Hannibal had begun to turn.<sup>61</sup> Andrew West observed that the political situation in the city and the ongoing experience of the war indelibly shaped the *Miles*. For West, Plautus wrote the play to “excite the people in favour of having Scipio sent to assume the offensive against Hannibal, and at a time when the Senate had not yet granted Scipio’s request.”<sup>62</sup> The present study challenges West’s interpretation.

The play’s eponymous braggart captain, Pygropolynices, is in fact a satirical caricature who mocks Scipio Africanus rather than endorsing or glorifying him. Pygropolynices is a boastful soldier who incessantly repeats stories about his heroism, which are either gross exaggerations or outright falsehoods.<sup>63</sup> A parallel can be drawn between Pygropolynices’ arrogant character and Africanus’ demands for Senatorial support of his radical plan to force Hannibal to return home by invading Africa. Africanus justified his demands by listing his military achievements and claiming he had earned the right to unilaterally direct strategy.<sup>64</sup> Plautus portrayed Pygropolynices as an inept authority figure; he is a commander whose actions (ultimately rooted in his arrogance)

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<sup>58</sup> Duncan Cloud, “Roman poetry and anti-militarism.” In *War and Society in the Roman World*, ed. J. Rich and G. Shipley (London: Routledge, 1997), 113-39.

<sup>59</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 43.

<sup>60</sup> *Miles Gloriosus* translates to ‘The Braggart Captain.’

<sup>61</sup> Andrew F. West, “On a Patriotic Passage in the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus.” *The American Journal of Philology* 8, no. 1 (1887): 17-24.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 25-26. Scipio did not acquire the honourific ‘Africanus’ (‘the conqueror of Africa’) until after his victory at Zama; prior to 202 he was known merely as P. Cornelius Scipio.

<sup>63</sup> Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus* I.1. The first act of the play is replete with examples of the character’s boastfulness.

<sup>64</sup> Livy, *From the founding of the city* XXVIII.43.11 – 44.18.

harm the common people. This is a commentary on the dangers of a self-absorbed commander, Africanus,<sup>65</sup> risking the fate of the Roman people by launching an invasion of Africa whilst Hannibal remained at large in Italy.

Cloud's assertion that anti-militaristic themes in Roman literature reflects the development of a counter-culture holds firm, as Plautus sought to subvert Africanus' image by linking him with the braggart captain.<sup>66</sup> Harris' claim however is not as strong. It is difficult to accurately quantify public perception: we know that the *Miles* was a very popular play, suggesting that public opinion was favourable to Plautus' satire. However, Africanus remained a heroic figure to the people; his mass appeal was apparently undented by the *Miles*. There is enough ambiguity here to conclude that although Romans were "preoccupied with war,"<sup>67</sup> their attitudes were not necessarily positive.

Another point Harris raised was that the quintennial prayers offered to the gods by newly elected censors reflected a cultural manifestation of militaristic attitudes.<sup>68</sup> The prayer called for the censors to "make the possessions of the Roman people better."<sup>69</sup> Harris interpreted this as demanding a commitment to imperial expansion. However, his point is flawed because censors did not wield *imperium*; therefore, any claim to imperial expansion by a censor would constitute an *ultra vires* breach of Roman administrative law.

None of the censorial responsibilities point towards military command. Censors were not empowered to influence Rome's imperial expansion. Moreover, nearly all censors were former consuls;<sup>70</sup> having already attained the summit of the *cursus honorum*,

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<sup>65</sup> G. Karl Galinsky, "Scipionic Themes in Plautus' *Amphitruo*." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 97 (1966): 211-12, 217. Galinsky identified that the *Miles Gloriosus* explicitly referred to the Cornelii Scipiones and Africanus in particular, through some lines of dialogue closely resembling the epitaphs engraved on the family's tombstones. Plautus' critical depiction of Pygropolynices therefore served as a device through which he could satirise Africanus.

<sup>66</sup> As shown by Galinsky's analysis above.

<sup>67</sup> *Supra*, no. 52.

<sup>68</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 118-20. The censorship was an office responsible for registering citizens and their properties (and thereby calculating their tax burden), managing the state treasury, and regulating public morality to maintain the traditional Roman character and values. It was a special magistracy that customarily only former consuls were considered for; typically, censors were old men who had already carved out spectacular political careers. Censors were elected every five years and begun their terms with the ceremony Harris describes. (Cf. William Smith, "Censor." In *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, ed. William Smith (London: John Murray, 1875), 260-66.)

<sup>69</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 118-20.

<sup>70</sup> Robert V. Cram, "The Roman Censors." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 51 (1940): 85-93. This article compiles a list of all known censors; we can see in the period 280 – 168 BCE that all

the need to gain further prestige and *gloria* would have been redundant. When this is considered, Harris' suggestion that their prayer related to imperialism is far-fetched. In line with our knowledge of the Roman constitution, the prayer almost certainly expressed sentiments for upholding traditional Roman character and virtues, or perhaps referred to agricultural prosperity and population growth.<sup>71</sup> Any militaristic overtones to the ceremony would have been incongruous with the legal responsibilities of the office it was dedicated to. This is a discrepancy that Harris did not explain, undermining his point.

### 3.2 Hellenistic popular attitudes

Warfare strongly influenced Greek popular attitudes. This is a constant seen across the Greek world. As Angelos Chaniotis wrote, the army was "a basic constituent of civic pride."<sup>72</sup> City-states and federations based in mainland Greece were particularly characterised by citizen participation in warfare. For instance, the prerequisite for Athenian citizenship required young men to undergo ephebic training from the ages of 18 - 20.<sup>73</sup>

Epigraphic evidence is the best source on the ephebic education that young Greek men underwent as a prerequisite for citizenship. An inscription discovered in Athens outlines their experience.<sup>74</sup> Unlike Rome,<sup>75</sup> military service in Athens was mandatory for all men, and all men were exposed to the pathologies of their state's military machine. Draft-dodging was simply not an option unless one wished to forego citizenship altogether. All men served at least two years in the military as evidenced by their ephebic training.<sup>76</sup> This was not localised to Athens; similar institutions existed in Sparta, Boeotia, Arcadia,

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but three censors had previously been consuls. See appendix, chapter 2 no. 5. for a tabulation of Cram's data and accompanying notes.

<sup>71</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 191-92.

<sup>72</sup> Angelos Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 24.

<sup>73</sup> The *ephebeia* was an institution for training young men in the civic virtues necessary for their adult lives as citizens. This training consisted exclusively of military drill; extra-curricular activities such as dancing were taught principally for their military applications. (Leonhard Schmitz, "Ephebus." In *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, ed. William Smith (London: John Murray, 1875), 462-63. Cf. Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, 48-49.)

<sup>74</sup> "Honours for the ephebes of 204/3 and their officers," trans. Stephen Lambert. In *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum Volume XXVI (1976-1977)*, ed. H.W. Pleket and R.S. Stroud (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 98. <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/SEG/2698>  
See appendix, chapter 2 no.6.

<sup>75</sup> Where only citizens from the top five taxation brackets were nominally eligible for conscription; though during times of crisis citizens were conscripted indiscriminately.

<sup>76</sup> As the inscription shows, ephebes were involved in active garrison duty and not just training: they "took care of the guarding of cities."

Crete, Macedonia, Anatolia, Caria, Thrace, Egypt and the Near East.<sup>77</sup> The practice was widespread throughout the Greek world.

The widespread existence of *ephebeias* has clear implications. Throughout the Greek world, most if not all men experienced soldierly living as impressionable youths. Harris opined that the adventure and opportunities for enrichment offered by a soldierly career made it appealing to common Roman men and encouraged them to enlist.<sup>78</sup> There is no reason to suggest that the same factors did not loom largely before Greek men; indeed, “making war and excelling in battle were the ideals of their education.”<sup>79</sup>

The argument is further buttressed by analysis of numismatic evidence. The motifs Hellenistic states chose to stamp upon their coinage reveal much about the importance of militarism to state identity and civic pride. Many states chose militaristic themes to decorate their coinage and serve as their official symbols. This could vary from depictions of weapons, war elephants and cavalry, and even the specialised abilities of their citizen soldiers.<sup>80</sup> The striking of these motifs on state issue currency shows the significance of militarism to informing conceptions of citizenship, civic duty, and statehood.

Public ceremonies invoking militaristic rhetoric were common throughout the Mediterranean. Ephebic oaths show how militarism informed Greek popular attitudes. The ephebic oath taken in the city of Dreros in Crete required the lifelong commitment of all ephebes to harm their enemies, the Lyttians.<sup>81</sup> The Athenian ephebic oath was explicitly imperialistic, requiring all ephebes to swear to enlarge their country’s borders.<sup>82</sup> Unlike the Roman censorial prayer, ephebic oaths were explicitly militaristic in both their content and the context in which they were sworn. Given that the *ephebeia* was common across the Greek world,<sup>83</sup> we can deduce that all Hellenistic states had similar ceremonies where

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<sup>77</sup> Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, 47-51. Boeotia and Arcadia were member-states of the Aetolian and Achaean Leagues, respectively. Anatolia, Caria and the Near East spanned the territories of the Seleucid Empire, Pergamon, and Rhodes; whilst the Ptolemaic dynasty ruled Egypt, and Thrace alternated between Macedon and the Seleucids.

<sup>78</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 47.

<sup>79</sup> Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, 45.

<sup>80</sup> See appendix below, chapter 2 nos. 7 - 10.

<sup>81</sup> Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, 46-47. See appendix below, chapter 2 no. 11.

<sup>82</sup> Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* I.77. See appendix below, chapter 2 no. 12.

<sup>83</sup> *Supra*, no. 77.

ephebes swore an oath. Finally, we also know that ephebic training was mandatory and a prerequisite for citizenship, therefore most Greek men would have sworn similar oaths.<sup>84</sup>

#### 4 Militarism, Politics, and Constitutions

Polybius identified the Roman constitution as a crucial factor in Roman success. Current scholarship has echoed his analysis. Exceptionalist arguments contend that militarism had immense value to the advancement of a Roman elite's political career – i.e. *gloria rei militaris*. This encouraged Roman elites to compete for the acclaim and wealth that conquest brought them.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, exceptionalist arguments posit that the Republican constitution made militarism the fundamental duty of the state. The reasoning concludes with the assertion that the uniquely militaristic outlook of Roman politics motivated imperial expansion; it was the decisive factor explaining Roman hegemony.

Historians correctly identify the Roman political system as a significant factor in the emergence of Roman hegemony. The analytic focus has been on militarism rather than on the constitution itself. This marks a departure from Polybius, who better understood the value of the constitution than contemporary scholars. Polybius' interest in the constitution focused on separation of powers, and not militarism. He frequently compared Rome with Carthage and various Greek states to argue that Rome's advantage laid in the constitutional foundation that facilitated its effective government.

The exceptionalist claims made regarding the importance of warfare to political advancement in Rome are persuasively argued and extensively evidenced. However, they are mistaken in assuming that militaristic politics was an exceptionally Roman feature. The political systems of Hellenistic states placed similar emphasis on military conquest. This section shows that militarism and political success were linked in states throughout the Mediterranean.

##### 4.1 Militarism and Roman politics

Militarism and Roman politics were inextricably bound. No man could sit in the Senate or run for any magistracy without having served ten seasons in the army.<sup>86</sup> Constant

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<sup>84</sup> Supra, no. 73.

<sup>85</sup> Vishnia, *State, Society and Popular Leaders*, 6-7. Cf. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 16-34.

<sup>86</sup> William V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 11-12.

warfare was a necessity to maintain social cohesion and public order.<sup>87</sup> War was thus the most important responsibility for any politician.<sup>88</sup> Their entry into politics required having previously spent a decade in the army, and their most important duty as politicians – maintaining public order – was primarily achieved through constant warfare.

Since war was the only proving ground for aristocrats to advance their political career, conquest inevitably became a highly valued commodity. Conquest brought with it glory, fame, and wealth, and ultimately power and political capital.<sup>89</sup> The ideology of *laus* and *gloria* required constant warfare.<sup>90</sup> This coincided with the need of constant warfare to maintain public order. The aspirations and responsibilities of aristocrats revolved almost entirely around war.

The triumph was a symbolically powerful Roman ceremony where a victorious general paraded around the city exhibiting the spoils of war, bringing “the actual sight of his achievements before the eyes of his fellow-citizens.”<sup>91</sup> Celebrating a triumph therefore gave a conquering general a significant boost in political capital. Moreover, triumphs could only be staged with the approval of the Senate; thus, to celebrate a triumph meant one had received a vote of confidence from the Senate. Fifteen out of nineteen praetorian *triumphatores* between 227 – 79 BCE went on to progress from the praetorship to the consulship.<sup>92</sup> As Rome’s sphere of dominance expanded, so too did the value of military acclaim for political advancement. Triumphs became contested with almost the same ferocity as elections,<sup>93</sup> pointing to “yet another aspect of the growing competition within the nobility for glory, honour and prestige.”<sup>94</sup>

The glory of conquest provided the crowning achievement which could propel an elite citizen into the highest office of the state; as Cicero declared, nothing could be more important for a would-be consul.<sup>95</sup> Harris concluded, “given the desirability of fame

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<sup>87</sup> Rosenstein, “Republican Rome,” 196-200.

<sup>88</sup> Raaflaub, “Born to be Wolves? Origins of Roman Imperialism,” 296.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 297-98.

<sup>90</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 34. ‘Laus’ and ‘Gloria’ refer to ‘Fame’ and ‘Glory,’ both derived from conquest.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 32. Praetors were the magistrates ranking below consuls.

<sup>93</sup> Vishnia, *State, Society and Popular Leaders*, 180.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 177-78.

<sup>95</sup> Cicero, *Pro Lucius Murena* IX.22. – XI.24. See appendix below, chapter 2 no. 13. M. Tullius Cicero (106 – 43 BCE) is among Rome’s most celebrated intellectual figures. He was a successful lawyer and a noted politician, serving as consul in 63, and was also renowned for his oratory and writings in rhetoric, prose and in philosophy.

acquired in war, it would not be surprising to find Roman aristocrats bellicose in their behaviour towards foreign states.”<sup>96</sup> Glory was also an important equalising measure for citizens from non-aristocratic backgrounds to assert their claims to political influence. Lacking the prestige of an illustrious family name, newly enfranchised *plebeians* who sought power attempted achieving social mobility via conquest.<sup>97</sup> Thus, militarism was paramount even for non-aristocratic Romans.

The argument that militarism held enormous political value to Romans is well supported and convincing. The correlation between political advancement and military success is undeniable. However, the central problem is the premise that Roman politics placed emphasis on militarism to an *exceptional* degree. This conclusion can only be reached if one does not analyse Hellenistic politics whatsoever; as Eckstein highlighted,<sup>98</sup> the failure to consider other Mediterranean societies is the main flaw in exceptionalist accounts. The study now turns to assess other Mediterranean polities and rejects the exceptionalist view by establishing the presence of militarism in Hellenistic politics.

#### 4.2 Militarism and Hellenistic politics

Conquest defined and legitimised the sovereignty of a Hellenistic king.<sup>99</sup> The sole criteria for kingship were conquest and militarism.<sup>100</sup> Alexander was the role model for Hellenistic monarchs: they were to strive for “dominion over the entire world;” their ideology was entirely imperialistic.<sup>101</sup> The warrior ethos of Macedonian kingship mandated excellence in battle and ambition for imperialistic expansion as the two most important kingly traits.<sup>102</sup>

An important illustration of this point is the struggle between Demetrius I Poliorcetes and Pyrrhus of Epirus for the Macedonian throne.<sup>103</sup> Demetrius had counted on

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<sup>96</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 33.

<sup>97</sup> Vishnia, *State, Society and Popular Leaders*, 6-7.

<sup>98</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 183

<sup>99</sup> Christopher Tuplin, “The Military Dimension of Hellenistic Kingship: An Achaemenid Inheritance?” In *Orient und Okzident in Hellenistischer Zeit*, ed. F. Hoffmann and K.S. Schmidt (Druck: KDD Digital-Druck GmbH Nürnberg, 2014), 254.

<sup>100</sup> Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, 57.

<sup>101</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 111. Cf. Polybius, *The Histories* V.10.9 – 11.

<sup>102</sup> John Serrati, “The Hellenistic World at War: Stagnation or Development?” In *The Oxford Handbook of Warfare in the Classical World*, ed. Brian Campbell and Lawrence A. Tritle (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2013), 179-80.

<sup>103</sup> Demetrius I Poliorcetes (Demetrius ‘the Besieger of Cities’) (r.294 – 288 BCE) was the second Antigonid king.

his Macedonian ethnicity and his status as the firstborn son of Antigonus I Monophthalmus as sufficient factors to see off Pyrrhus' challenge.<sup>104</sup> Demetrius believed that the Macedonians would never swear fealty to a foreigner ahead of himself, the son of the mighty Antigonus, the most renowned of all Alexander's successors.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, Demetrius was recognised for his intense militarism through his honorific epithet, 'the Besieger.' Demetrius was called the Besieger because of his innovativeness in siege warfare,<sup>106</sup> a consequence of constant attempts to capture Greek cities. In every respect then, he should have been the ideal Macedonian king: his ethnicity and lineage made him eligible and well-known to the Macedonians, and his military career was characterised by a remarkably intense commitment to empire-building.

But the Macedonians spurned Demetrius and acknowledged Pyrrhus as their true king. As discussed previously, Pyrrhus was also famously imperialistic, and as Plutarch emphasized, this factor decided the issue.<sup>107</sup> It is remarkable that the Macedonians chose Pyrrhus ahead of Demetrius since the latter was extraordinarily imperialistic.<sup>108</sup> But his aggression was insufficient in comparison to Pyrrhus, which cost him his throne. This attests to the importance of militarism to Hellenistic notions of kingship.

A king's right to rule over a territory came from its conquest. The concept of 'spear-won land' validated territorial claims.<sup>109</sup> The great dynastic kings laid claim to territories through right of conquest;<sup>110</sup> smaller monarchies followed the precedent and also emphasized conquest for legitimising sovereignty.<sup>111</sup> Proprietary claims were often intergenerational; for instance Antiochus the Great claimed Thrace since his forebear Seleucus I Nicator had conquered it,<sup>112</sup> whilst Antiochus IV Epiphanes similarly claimed

<sup>104</sup> Although Pyrrhus was a fellow Greek, he was an Epirote, not a Macedonian. Antigonus Monophthalmus (Antigonus 'the One-Eyed') was the founder of the Antigonid dynasty.

<sup>105</sup> Thomas R. Martin, "Demetrius "the Besieger" and Hellenistic Warfare." In *The Oxford Handbook of Warfare in the Classical World*, ed. Brian Campbell & Lawrence A. Tritle (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2013), 680.

<sup>106</sup> Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, 61: "Expertise in war characterizes Demetrios the Besieger."

<sup>107</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* VIII.1 – 3.; *Life of Demetrius* XLI.3. See appendix below, chapter 2 nos. 14, 15.

<sup>108</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Demetrius* XLII.6., I.7 – 8.

<sup>109</sup> F.W. Walbank, "Monarchies and Monarchic Ideas." In *The Cambridge Ancient History. Volume VII Part I: The Hellenistic World*, ed. F.W. Walbank, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 66-67.

<sup>110</sup> Eric Turner, "Ptolemaic Egypt." In *The Cambridge Ancient History. Volume VII Part I: The Hellenistic World*, ed. F.W. Walbank, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 122.

<sup>111</sup> K. Meister, "Agathocles." In *The Cambridge Ancient History. Volume VII Part I: The Hellenistic World*, ed. F.W. Walbank, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 411.

<sup>112</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* XVIII.51.3 – 4.



Coele-Syria through ancestral right of conquest.<sup>113</sup> But ultimately claims were ratified by present conquest, not ancestral conquest. The idea that conquest established ownership was connected to religious ideals: victory signified that one was favoured by the gods,<sup>114</sup> thereby legitimising their territorial claim. As Thucydides wrote, the gods were gods of power; they ruled wherever they could, and they favoured men who did likewise.<sup>115</sup>

Militarism was similarly paramount to the political careers of Greek elites in democracies and federations. Expertise in military matters was the most important characteristic for democratic leaders. Defence of the *polis* was the highest duty civil servants were tasked with.<sup>116</sup> Plutarch, writing centuries after Greece had come under Roman domination, lamented that Greeks of his lifetime had no “opening for a conspicuous and brilliant public career,” since “the affairs of cities no longer include leadership in wars.”<sup>117</sup> The great Greek statesmen who were the subjects of Plutarch’s biographies were above all else imperialists; without the opportunity to prove themselves on the battlefield, Plutarch’s contemporaries could never reach the heights scaled by Pericles or Philopoemen.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, the Greek aristocracy originated in warfare. Military honours were hereditary; a successful and charismatic *strategos* could ensure his descendants a prominent position in society.<sup>119</sup> Militarism, therefore, was as important to a Greek aristocrat as it was to a Hellenistic monarch.

Compared to Rome, the stakes were significantly higher in Hellenistic politics. If a monarch failed to be the most militaristic man, he ran the risk of losing his throne and his life. However, if a Roman aristocrat was outdone by another in the race for *gloria rei militaris*, he simply had to wait a year for another chance to run for consul. Moreover, once a Roman became consul, he could not be impeached due to being insufficiently militaristic.<sup>120</sup> Conquest and militarism were therefore markedly less important to a Roman elite than they were to a Hellenistic monarch. As Chaniotis summarised, the motto for a

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., XXVIII.1.1 – 6.

<sup>114</sup> Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, 183. Cf. Tuplin, “The Military Dimension of Hellenistic Kingship,” 257-58.

<sup>115</sup> Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* V.105.

<sup>116</sup> Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, 31-32.

<sup>117</sup> Plutarch, *Precepts of Statecraft* 805 B.

<sup>118</sup> Two great Greek statesmen who were subjects of Plutarch’s biographies.

<sup>119</sup> Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, 40-41.

<sup>120</sup> At worst, insufficient militarism would have harmed one’s chances of re-election; however, by statute one could not run for consul within ten years of their last term in office, so the negative impact of insufficient militarism while in office is debatable – they would have a decade as proconsuls to rectify their image.

Hellenistic king was “conquer or perish.”<sup>121</sup> This has a rather more perilous ring to it than the Roman equivalent, which might have read ‘conquer, or spend another year stuck as an ordinary Senator.’ Having compared the nature of Roman and Hellenistic politics, the study turns to assess the Roman constitution.

#### 4.3 The Republican constitution

Polybius asserted that the strength of the Republican constitution was the ultimate basis of Roman power. For Polybius, all states were organised in one of three forms of government: kingship, aristocracy, and democracy. He wrote that each of these three forms has a counterpart that they inevitably degenerate into; in his view, states were like organic beings that followed a pattern of growth – prime – decline.<sup>122</sup> Kingship gives rise to tyranny; aristocracy develops as a reaction to tyranny, and oligarchy grows as aristocracy decays; in turn, democracy arises to defeat oligarchy, and as it corrupts into ochlocracy, the endpoint of state evolution is reached. Polybius argued that uniquely among its neighbours, Rome inoculated itself from governmental evolution through its constitution. He asserted that the mixed constitution of the Romans<sup>123</sup> created a balanced state apparatus where no one part could function without the support of the other two. He credited the strength of the Republican constitution for Rome’s success in all its endeavours.<sup>124</sup>

Polybius contended that Rome defeated Hannibal because its constitution was superior to the Carthaginian constitution. Although there were similarities between them,<sup>125</sup> Polybius believed that the Carthaginian republic had entered decline. Rome, conversely, was enjoying its prime. As he explained, a state in its prime would inevitably triumph over an enemy in decline.<sup>126</sup> Polybius’ analysis has a firmer grasp of the true value of the Roman constitution than exceptionalist analyses. The strength of Rome’s political system in aiding imperialism was not that it rewarded militaristic politicians; as we have

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<sup>121</sup> Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, 58, 60: “As long as his actions remained successful, his power was unquestioned. It is not surprising then if military failure was the beginning of many a ruler’s end.”

<sup>122</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* VI.3 – 10. Cf. Plato, *Republic* VIII., and Aristotle, *Politics* II., V. Polybius was not alone in proposing this teleological model of government evolution; theories of this nature were common in ancient political thought.

<sup>123</sup> Where the consuls (representing kingship), the Senate (representing aristocracy), and the people (representing democracy) all wielded influence over politics.

<sup>124</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* VI.11 – 18

<sup>125</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* II.12. Aristotle’s analysis of the Carthaginian constitution shows clear parallels with Polybius’ analysis of the Roman constitution.

<sup>126</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* VI.51.4 – 8. See appendix below, chapter 2 no. 16.

seen, all states did so. Rather, it was the separation of powers in the constitution that enabled the Romans to make sound decisions.

Roman law mandated annual rotation of the high magistracies and command positions. The desire for separation of powers and term limits for magistracies did not arise from an intensely militaristic political culture. The cause for the obsession with republicanism lies in the history of Rome. The Republic was founded with the violent expulsion of the last Roman king in 509 BCE; “forever after the Romans hated the very idea of a king.”<sup>127</sup> Tyrants and monarchs were anathema; even the word ‘king’ was intolerable.<sup>128</sup> This cultural affectation was ultimately responsible for the strength of the Roman constitution. It is not reflective of an exceptional belligerence on Rome’s part.

One striking feature of Roman politics was the circumvention of laws, customs and precedents during times of crisis. Constitutional provisions were ignored when the occasion called for it.<sup>129</sup> Although deviation from the law tends to destabilize states, the flexibility shown in violating laws during exceptional circumstances was a major factor in Roman survival during the Second Punic War.<sup>130</sup> Regulations were “conveniently brushed aside when a serious military crisis demanded the election of competent commanders;” ironically, flouting the law in such situations itself became a traditional and customary practice.<sup>131</sup> Thus, the Roman political system had in-built mechanisms for both lawfully and unlawfully appointing the best available commanders to the highest offices.

Hellenistic monarchies conversely had no such provisions for rotating command, legal or otherwise. Ultimate power resided in the king, and the only avenues for change were his abdication or death, or deposition by a usurper. This could prove problematic if a king was unfit for command. The powerful cultural norms that demanded Hellenistic kings to entirely focus their education and attention on warfare did not create a production line of outstanding generals - even the most profound interest in a certain subject does not guarantee success in it. Many Hellenistic kings sought to emulate Alexander by personally leading cavalry charges against the enemy. But unlike Alexander, they did so at tactically

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<sup>127</sup> Cornell, “Rome and Latium to 390 B.C.,” 262.

<sup>128</sup> Livy, *From the founding of the city* XXVII.19.3 – 6. Livy’s description of Scipio Africanus’ aghast reaction to being called a king by Iberian soldiers illustrates the Roman aversion for kingship.

<sup>129</sup> Vishnia, *State, Society and Popular Leaders*, 50-51.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

inopportune moments, reflecting a desire to appear kingly and satisfy cultural expectations more so than exercising the pragmatism necessary in command.

## 5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown problems in exceptionalist interpretations of Roman imperialism. Analysing Hellenistic and Roman society shows that militaristic attitudes were normative throughout the Mediterranean. Rome was therefore not an exceptionally militarised society. The exceptionalist proposition only holds true in very specific ways, such as the harsh discipline Roman soldiers were subjected to, and the well-organised manner that Roman society was run in. Imperialism is a complex phenomenon which cannot be accounted for by such minor internal differences. More sophisticated analyses which examine systemic factors are of much greater value than culturalist explanations that focus on the internal attributes of states. In the next chapter, the study evaluates the significance of neorealist theory in political science for understanding the origins of Roman imperialism.

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# CHAPTER III

## SYSTEMIC EXPLANATIONS FOR ROMAN HEGEMONY

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## 1. Introduction

The objectives of this chapter are threefold: firstly, to continue where the previous chapter left off in explaining why exceptionalist accounts of Roman imperialism are insufficient; secondly, to justify and explain the value of political science to understanding historical outcomes during the Hellenistic Period; and lastly, to analyse the views of recent historians who interpret Roman imperialism through a systemic approach considering the behaviours and characteristics of other states, and not just Rome in isolation.

The chapter begins by defining and discussing the key principles and terminology of neorealism, which is one theoretical framework in political science for understanding interstate conflict. In the first section, it examines the theoretical problems in culturalist explanations for imperialism, known in neorealism as unit-attribute theory. Next, it explains neorealism's major insights. The definitions are related to events during Hellenistic Period throughout the section, by elucidating the links between the theory and the accounts in ancient sources. This highlights how the analysis of ancient intellectuals can be better understood by applying a neorealist framework.

With the establishment of the theoretical problems in Roman exceptionalism, the study can begin probing for the fundamental cause of Roman expansion. Current historians who advocate more nuanced, systemic explanations for Roman imperialism are discussed. The study endorses their interpretations as the best explanation of Rome's expansion in the Hellenistic world.

## 2. Principles of Neorealism and Ancient Historians

Political scientists reject the notion that the internal make-up of states has major influences on their international conduct. Numerous studies have found that states are not war-prone due to their internal attributes. Quantitative analysis shows that warfare is only a probable outcome when there are shifts of power within a state-system.<sup>1</sup> A compilation of these studies summarized:

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive list and discussion of these studies, see: Daniel S. Geller & J. David Singer, *Nations at war: A scientific study of international conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 46-85, 113-39.

“There is little supportive evidence of a connection between these national attributes and foreign conflict behaviour or war... national culture appears to be unrelated to monadic-level foreign conflict.”<sup>2</sup>

One objection to applying these conclusions is that they were drawn from research on interstate relations during the Cold War. However, the present study contends that modern political science is applicable to the Hellenistic Period. Its interdisciplinary approach is justified because neorealism finds its origins in the arguments made by ancient intellectuals on the interstate relations of their day.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this section is to define neorealism’s claims and investigate how they relate to ancient scholarship.

### 2.1 Unit-attribute theory and *Symploke*

Unit-attribute theories hold that historical outcomes are explained primarily by the internal characteristics of a single state.<sup>4</sup> Exceptionalist arguments are textbook examples of the paradigm since they entirely focus on Roman internal structures.<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Waltz identified the problems with unit-attribute theory. He differentiated between reductionist and systemic explanations: systemic explanations “conceive of causes operating at the international level”; reductionist explanations “concentrate causes at the individual or national level.”<sup>6</sup> Reductionist theories identify state internal structures as causal agents for war and imperialism.<sup>7</sup> This naturally means that if states lacked those internal structures, then they would not be great imperial powers, they would not be conflict-prone, they would not be militaristic, and so on.

This is the focal point of neorealist objection to unit-level explanations. Neorealism contends that all states are functionally similar in their international conduct, regardless of

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 52. See also pages 56, 64, and 67.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York City: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 66. Cf.: Arthur M. Eckstein, “Thucydides... and the Foundation of International Systems Theory,” 757-74. Robert Gilpin, “The Theory of Hegemonic War,” 591-613.

Joseph S. Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History* (New York City: Pearson Longman, 2007), 2, 12-28.

Mark V. Kauppi, “Thucydides: Character and capabilities.” *Security Studies*, 5, no.2 (1995): 142-68.

Paul A. Rahe, “Thucydides’ critique of realpolitik.” *Security Studies*, 5, no.2 (1995): 105-41.

Laurie M. Johnson Bagby, “Thucydidean realism: Between Athens and Melos.” *Security Studies*, 5, no.2 (1995): 169-93.

Michael W. Doyle, “Thucydides: A Realist?” In *Hegemonic Rivalry: From Thucydides to the Nuclear Age*, ed. B.S. Strauss and R.N. Lebow (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 169.

<sup>4</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 185.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory.” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no.4 (1988): 617.

their internal attributes. All states are alike because anarchy incentivises them to behave similarly. Waltz argued that there are observable patterns in the causes of wars, despite “wide variations in the attributes and interactions of the agents that supposedly cause them.”<sup>8</sup> Unit-level explanations are problematic because states have great diversity in internal structures but relatively few differences in behaviour. The variations in internal structures are unequal to the observed effects.<sup>9</sup> There are only two possible outcomes: war or peace. But states can configure themselves in limitless combinations of political, social, and cultural structures.<sup>10</sup> Despite the variations in internal structures, all states are functionally similar because security is their main objective.<sup>11</sup> The grim assertion in neorealism is that war and militarized cultures are normal and predictable responses from all states in an anarchic state-system: “states must meet the demands of the political eco-system or court annihilation.”<sup>12</sup>

The primary methodological flaw of Roman exceptionalism is its failure to assess states other than Rome. States do not exist in isolation but as participants in an international system. Historical outcomes, while influenced by internal state cultures, are not primarily caused by them.<sup>13</sup> Systemic forces take precedence since states are functionally similar despite variations in their internal attributes; therefore, the system fundamentally causes state decisions.<sup>14</sup> The importance of the system is intensified for our context since militarization was a widespread cultural affectation seen throughout the Mediterranean. If all states are militaristic, then focusing on the militarization of one specific state is bound to provide a misleading explanation for a historical outcome.<sup>15</sup> The cause of Roman imperialism is not understood by investigating how Roman militarism led to its universal empire. Rather, the cause is understood by examining how the structure of the ancient Mediterranean state-system influenced its participants.

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<sup>8</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 67.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>10</sup> Supra, no.7.

<sup>11</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, “Structural Realism.” In *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. T. Dunne, M. Kurki and S. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 80: “The main goal of states is survival. States... can pursue other goals... but those aims must always take a back seat to survival, because if a state does not survive, it cannot pursue those other goals.”

<sup>12</sup> Richard W. Sterling, *Macropolitics: International Relations in a Global Society* (New York City: Random House, 1974), 336.

<sup>13</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 186-87.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 3-4.



Polybius explicitly aimed to provide a systemic analysis of Roman imperialism. The central theme of his *Histories* was *symploke* ('interconnectedness').<sup>16</sup> For Polybius, Roman hegemony was the endpoint of a trend initiated by the events of the 140<sup>th</sup> *Olympiad*.<sup>17</sup> This trend was the increasing interconnection of the Mediterranean world, which was previously divided into two separate state-systems located in the west and east. Events in one Mediterranean system had exerted minimal impact on the other prior to the 140<sup>th</sup> *Olympiad*. Polybius highlighted its importance because for the first time, events in the west shaped decisions in the east; so, the 140<sup>th</sup> *Olympiad* marked the beginning of Mediterranean interconnection. Some wars broke out independently, whilst others were consequences of the Second Punic War – but all wars had conclusions affecting the entire Mediterranean.<sup>18</sup>

*Symploke* defined Polybius' methodology, manifesting in his focus on systemic analysis and rejection of "isolated" and "special" histories.<sup>19</sup> By "isolated" histories, Polybius referred to studies focusing on a single state. The metaphor he used to contrast that approach with his own is striking: "isolated" history is to universal history as a dream is to the truth.<sup>20</sup> Polybius' distaste for unit-level explanations is reinforced in a later passage, where he argued that historical outcomes could only be truly understood if they were contextualised within his systemic approach.<sup>21</sup>

Polybius' emphasis on *symploke* shows similarities with Waltz's point that international politics can only be understood by analysis of structural level factors.<sup>22</sup> In neorealist terms, Polybius effectively rejected unit-attribute theory and endorsed systemic analysis. The reductionist methodology of Roman exceptionalism contradicts Polybius, therefore exceptionalist arguments are based on a misinterpretation of our most important

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<sup>16</sup> F.W. Walbank, "Sympleke: its role in Polybius' Histories," in *Yale Classical Studies Volume XXIV: Studies in the Greek Historians*, ed. D. Kagan (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 197-212.

<sup>17</sup> The 140<sup>th</sup> Olympiad spanned 220 – 216 BCE, during which the Second Punic War between Rome and Carthage; the Social War between Macedon and the Achaean League against Sparta and the Aetolian League; the Fourth Syrian War between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties; and the First Macedonian War between Rome and Macedon simultaneously occurred. These conflicts are discussed in detail in the first chapter, at section 3.

<sup>18</sup> Walbank, "Sympleke: its role in Polybius' Histories," 200.

<sup>19</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* I.4.7 – 11. Cf. V.31.6. See appendix below, Chapter 3 no.1.

<sup>20</sup> F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius, Volume I: Commentary on Books I – VI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 45-46.

<sup>21</sup> See appendix below, Chapter 3 no.2.

<sup>22</sup> Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," 617-18.

source. Neorealist theory, conversely, is consistent with Polybius through its own advocacy of systemic analysis. We now proceed to examine neorealism's core insights.

## 2.2 Anarchic state-systems

Anarchy is the conceptual fulcrum of neorealism. An anarchic state-system is characterised by the absence of international law.<sup>23</sup> The absence of a 'higher power' greater than individual states gives a state-system its anarchic character. As Waltz wrote, "the prominent characteristic of international politics... seems to be the lack of order and of organization."<sup>24</sup> Neorealism assumes that anarchy is the default format of international systems, and the paradigm's insights stem from this core assumption.

Due to the absence of international law, conflicts of interest between states are difficult to resolve peacefully.<sup>25</sup> Generally, conflicts of interest are only resolvable through military force, since there are no independent bodies capable of mediating disputes. Neorealists contend that all states in an anarchic state-system are functionally similar for this reason: in a system lacking reliable conflict-resolution mechanisms, power is the only guarantor of a state's security.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, all states engage in power-maximising behaviours; and the conclusions that all states will be highly militarized and that war is the default method of resolving disputes naturally follow.<sup>27</sup> As Hannah Arendt observed:

"The chief reason warfare is still with us is neither a secret death wish of the human species, nor an irrepressible instinct of aggression... but the simple fact that no substitute for this final arbiter in international relations has yet appeared."<sup>28</sup>

Anarchy is a prominent theme in Polybius' *Histories*. He explicitly stated that the anarchy of the Mediterranean state-system was the major causal factor for the Fourth Syrian War.<sup>29</sup> Envoys representing the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings met during the *détente* of 218 and attempted to diplomatically resolve the Coele-Syria dispute. But the talks proved fruitless, since "there was no one to interpose between them with the power of preventing and restraining any disposition that displayed itself to transgress the bounds of

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<sup>23</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 88-89: "International politics... has been called 'politics in the absence of government.'"

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>25</sup> Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism," 80.

<sup>26</sup> Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism," 80.

<sup>27</sup> *Supra*, nos. 11, 12.

<sup>28</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York City: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970), 5.

<sup>29</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* V.67.

justice.”<sup>30</sup> Polybius added, “the consequence was that both sides grew weary of negotiating and there was no prospect yet of a conclusion being reached... [so] Antiochus collected his forces with the object of invading Coele-Syria.”<sup>31</sup> This shows that war was the only reliable mechanism for conflict-resolution in the ancient Mediterranean.<sup>32</sup> Diplomacy stalled because it was impossible to mediate disputes between equally powerful states, which forced states to resolve disputes through war. Polybius’ comments on the Fourth Syrian War fit perfectly into neorealist models of anarchy. The absence of international law made power the sole guarantor of security, and ancient states had no reliable alternative to warfare.<sup>33</sup>

Another example of anarchy appears in Plutarch’s *Life of Pyrrhus*. The Pyrrhic War ensued because diplomacy was ineffectual, and power was the only guarantor of state security. Before hostilities commenced, Pyrrhus despatched an envoy to the Roman consul Laevinus, offering to mediate the dispute with Tarentum.<sup>34</sup> His attempt to reach a diplomatic solution failed. Laevinus replied that “the Romans neither chose Pyrrhus as a mediator nor feared him as a foe.”<sup>35</sup> The second reason given is crucial: Rome refused negotiation because it did not fear Pyrrhus. That is, Epirote power was not great enough to enforce a diplomatic resolution. This reinforces the point that conflicts of interest between equally powerful states can only be resolved by military force.

After winning the first battle, Pyrrhus again attempted diplomatic resolution by offering a peace settlement. Most Roman senators were “inclined towards peace, since they had been defeated,”<sup>36</sup> and an agreement appeared likely as the Senate convened to vote on the issue. However, the influential senator Ap. Claudius Caecus made a speech that swayed the vote against truce.<sup>37</sup> Plutarch recorded the contents of the speech and appended his analysis,<sup>38</sup> which show Rome’s disinterest for a diplomatic solution. Military force alone would determine the issue. Ap. Claudius’ speech reinforces neorealist insights on anarchy because his primary concern was that Rome would appear weak if it accepted

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. V.67.11.

<sup>31</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* V.68.1.

<sup>32</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 99-104.

<sup>33</sup> Supra, nos. 23-27. For further discussion of anarchy in Polybius, see Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 98, 101-02.

<sup>34</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* XVI.3.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. XVI.4.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. XVIII.5.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. XVIII.6.

<sup>38</sup> The speech: Ibid. XIX.3. Plutarch’s analysis: XIX.4. See appendix below, Chapter 3 nos. 3, 4.

peace; and if Rome appeared weak, other states would attack. Moreover, his assertion that Pyrrhus was untrustworthy is a demonstration of the paranoia that characterises interstate relations in anarchy. Fear and mistrust of other states is a key component of what neorealists term the ‘security dilemma,’ which is now discussed.

### 2.3 The security dilemma

Security is the primary objective of all states, because all other goals are unachievable if a state is annihilated by its enemies.<sup>39</sup> Since security and power are synonymous in anarchy,<sup>40</sup> the pursuit of security is a zero-sum game; that is, states can only build their security at the expense of all other participants in the system.<sup>41</sup> Thus, a state attempting to improve its security indirectly threatens all other states, and paradoxically the state may compromise itself in the long run by motivating its rivals to unite against it.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, states cannot accurately assess the intentions of their rivals, since having complete intelligence on them is impossible.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, states are disposed towards mistrusting and fearing each other. This phenomenon is called the ‘security dilemma.’<sup>44</sup>

Fear and mistrust were powerful factors in the behaviour of ancient states. Ap. Claudius’ speech during the Pyrrhic War is one notable example.<sup>45</sup> Rome’s alliance with the Aetolian League is another. This alliance was concluded due to Rome’s apprehension of Macedonian intentions.<sup>46</sup> Philip V had aligned with Hannibal in 215, and the Romans perceived a possibility that he may join Hannibal in Italy. With their armies already struggling to contain Hannibal alone, a Macedonian invasion of Italy would have been disastrous. The invasion never came, but the point Polybius made is clear: Roman fear of Philip’s intentions led to their forming an alliance with the Aetolians.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 179. Cf. Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 18-20.

<sup>40</sup> Supra, no. 26.

<sup>41</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 18-20. Cf. Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma.” *World Politics* 30, no.2 (1978): 169: “Many of the means by which a state tries to increase its security decrease the security of others.”

<sup>42</sup> Alan Collins, “Escaping a security dilemma: Anarchy, certainty and embedded norms.” *International Politics* 51, no.5 (2014): 562-63. Cf. Charles L. Glaser, “The Security Dilemma Revisited.” *World Politics* 50, no.1 (1997): 178.

<sup>43</sup> Mearsheimer, “Structural Realism,” 80.

<sup>44</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 22.

<sup>45</sup> Supra, nos. 36-38.

<sup>46</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* V.105.8.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

States respond to the security dilemma by attempting to increase their power. In the modern context, power is gained by either external or internal means. But prior to the Industrial Revolution, states could not achieve substantial power increases internally.<sup>48</sup> During the Hellenistic Period, substantial power increases could only be accomplished externally, through alliances or conquest.<sup>49</sup> Ancient states responded to the security dilemma by adopting either an expansionist or a *status quo* outlook. Expansionist states augment security through aggressive military policy.<sup>50</sup> *Status quo* states secure themselves by acting to maintain the balance of power.<sup>51</sup>

Expansionism was Rome's response to the security dilemma. As exceptionalist arguments stress, conquest was the Roman state's primary function. This manifested in Roman military strategy. A good example is the invasion of Africa during the Second Punic War, where Scipio Africanus reasoned that Roman interests would be best served by shifting the battleground from Italy to Carthaginian territory.<sup>52</sup>

Rome was not the only expansionist state in the ancient Mediterranean. Carthage and the Hellenistic dynasties also waged aggressive wars in foreign territory. The Second Punic War and Roman – Seleucid War are instances demonstrating that expansionism was widespread. In the former, Hannibal invaded Italy and prosecuted the war there for sixteen years; he planned to shatter Roman power by occupying Italy. Whilst in the Roman – Seleucid War, Hannibal counselled Antiochus the Great to fight in Italy instead of Greece:

“When your army comes, carry the war into Italy so that they may be distracted by evils at home, and thus harm you as little as possible, and make no advance for fear of what may befall themselves.”<sup>53</sup>

Hannibal and Scipio Africanus both posited the same rationale for aggression. For powerful states like theirs, attacking enemies in their homeland was much safer than fighting them in one's own territory, i.e. expansion was the way to achieve security. Thus, expansionism was understood as a viable strategy of increasing security throughout the ancient world.

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<sup>48</sup> A.F.K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York City: Borzoi Books, 1968), 347.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 21.

<sup>51</sup> Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” 186-214.

<sup>52</sup> Livy, *From the founding of the city* XXVIII.44.14 – 15. See appendix below, Chapter 3 no.5.

<sup>53</sup> Appian of Alexandria, *The Syrian Wars* III.14.

There were also numerous *status quo* states in the ancient Mediterranean. Minor powers preferred to maintain *status quo* because they could not match the system's first-tier powers, so conquest was not as viable as balancing. Maintaining balance of power was a viable strategy because one powerful state would always be present to protect weaker states from transgressions by another.<sup>54</sup> We can find several examples in Polybius. Athens developed a policy of strict neutrality in dealing with the great dynasties;<sup>55</sup> as Christian Habicht stressed, Athenian neutrality was a survival strategy.<sup>56</sup> Another good example is Syracuse, whose policy between the First and Second Punic Wars focused on maintaining a balance of power between Carthage and Rome.<sup>57</sup> A third example is Epirus in the Third Macedonian War, which attempted to maintain *status quo* from fear of coming under the domination of either Macedon or Rome.<sup>58</sup>

Through these examples of state paranoia and expansionist and *status quo* strategy, we can deduce that the security dilemma was a major factor in the reasoning of ancient statesmen. The salient point here is that the system takes precedence over unit-attributes in determining state actions. This premise is strengthened by neorealist analysis of specific state behaviours, which is now discussed.

#### 2.4 State behaviours in anarchic systems

States respond to the pressures of anarchy by engaging in 'balancing' and 'buck-passing' behaviours.<sup>59</sup> Neorealists argue that smaller states protect themselves against more powerful enemies by appealing to another powerful state to intervene, i.e. 'buck-pass' by entrusting the responsibility of resisting their enemy to a more powerful state. Alternatively, smaller states may form coalitions against larger states and resist them collectively; this is termed 'balancing.'<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Arthur M. Eckstein, "Polybios and International Systems Theory." In *Belonging and Isolation in the Hellenistic World*, ed. S. Ager and R. Faber (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 140. Cf. Livy, *From the founding of the city* XLII.30.5 – 6.

<sup>55</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* V.106.6 – 8. Cf. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* I.36.5., VII.7.7.

<sup>56</sup> Christian Habicht, *Athens from Alexander to Antony*, trans. Deborah L. Schneider (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 176.

<sup>57</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* I.83.2 – 4.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., XXVIII.15.11 – 16.

<sup>59</sup> Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism," 80: "Threatened states sometimes opt for buck-passing rather than joining a balancing coalition. In other words, they attempt to get other states to assume the burden of checking a powerful opponent while they remain on the sidelines."

<sup>60</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York City: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 271.

The narrative history of our period begins with a clear example of buck-passing: in 280, the Tarentines felt imperilled by Roman aggression and felt that they did not have the capability to resist Roman armies alone.<sup>61</sup> Hence, they appealed to Pyrrhus and he obliged by invading Italy.<sup>62</sup> The Pyrrhic War thus began because of Tarentine buck-passing. Large states do not intervene to protect small states for charitable reasons. They accept the appeals of small states because there is some advantage in doing so, such as increasing their power.<sup>63</sup> This was why Pyrrhus intervened. He was not particularly interested in protecting Tarentum; the ultimate objective was conquest of the western Mediterranean, and Italy was a convenient beginning to that end.<sup>64</sup> Epirote power would be magnified if he was successful, and as Plutarch stressed this was the reason for Pyrrhus' acceptance of Tarentine pleas.

Polybius' narrative features buck-passing on numerous occasions, most notably around 201/200 BCE when Rome received envoys from several Greek states appealing for intervention against Macedon. Greek appeals to Rome were so common in Polybius' narrative that he devised an aphorism for it:

“If, as the phrase is, they are at their last gasp, they will take refuge with the Romans and put themselves and the city in their hands.”<sup>65</sup>

Here he was referring to Lampascus.<sup>66</sup> The Lampascenes had appealed to Rome against Seleucid aggression,<sup>67</sup> and Polybius quipped that this was what states did when they were desperate. From these examples, we can conclude that buck-passing was a well-known state behaviour in the ancient Mediterranean.

Polybius identified balancing as a state strategy and commented on it approvingly.<sup>68</sup> One example is his analysis of Syracuse during the years 240 – 220.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> P.R. Franke, “Pyrrhus,” in *Cambridge Ancient History Volume VII Part 2*, ed. F.W. Walbank, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 456-57.

<sup>62</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* XIII.2 – 6.

<sup>63</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 38.

<sup>64</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* XIV.3 – 6.

<sup>65</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* XVIII.49.

<sup>66</sup> F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius, Volume II: Commentary on Books VII to XVIII* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 620-21. Lampascus was a minor Greek city-state in northwestern Anatolia (see appendix below, map 3: rendered as “Lampsakos”).

<sup>67</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* XVIII.52.

<sup>68</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York City: Colombia University Press, 2001), 199.

<sup>69</sup> Syracuse was a Greek city-state in Sicily. Sicily was a theatre of the First and Second Punic Wars; Syracuse was endangered by both Rome and Carthage during these conflicts.

Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, responded to the security dilemma by balancing. Alarmed at the growth of Roman power and at Carthaginian decline, Hiero sent financial and military assistance to Carthage, helping suppress a brutal mercenary revolt in Africa. Polybius explained that Hiero did this entirely for self-interested reasons.<sup>70</sup> Roman expansion made it necessary to promote Carthaginian power, since Carthage's destruction would yield complete Roman domination of the west. Therefore, balancing Rome by propping up Carthage was "very wise and sensible."<sup>71</sup> The critical point here is Polybius' general rule on state conduct. He used this example to argue that *status quo* states should always seek to maintain balance of power and always act to prevent an expansionist state from achieving hegemony.<sup>72</sup>

Livy reinforced Polybius' evaluation of balancing through his comments on the Third Macedonian War.<sup>73</sup> He stated that "the most respectable and sensible" Greeks would have preferred Rome and Macedon to be "equally balanced."<sup>74</sup> Livy emphasized that Greek elites understood that the victor would dominate Greece, so balancing was unachievable once the war broke out. But, if they could have chosen otherwise, they knew that balancing would yield the best results. This passage suggests that ancient statesmen appreciated the value of balancing. It also shows that Polybius' thoughts were shared by his contemporary Greek aristocrats.

## 2.5 Multipolarity, unipolarity, and hegemony

Anarchic state-systems take on different characteristics depending on the distribution of power in the system. Anarchies can be ordered in three ways: multipolarity, unipolarity and hegemony. Neorealists assume that multipolarity is the default mode that all state-systems inevitably regress to. Periods of multipolarity are punctuated by brief phases of unipolarity, and least frequently, phases of hegemony.

In multipolarity, power is distributed across the system relatively equally. Order is maintained by a balance of power between more than two states.<sup>75</sup> Multipolarity is the

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<sup>70</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* I.83.2 – 4. See appendix below, Chapter 3 no. 6.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Livy, *From the founding of the city* XLII.30.5 – 6. Cf. Polybius, *The Histories* XXX.6.5 – 8. See appendix below, Chapter 3 no. 7.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Richard Little, "The Balance of Power and Great Power Management," in *The Anarchical Society in a Globalized World*, eds. R. Little and J. Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 101.



least stable anarchical system since it is characterised by the presence of numerous states with similar capability. This threatens states because it means there are a multiplicity of potential security threats.<sup>76</sup> In turn, this makes states motivated to maximise their power. Warfare is most prevalent in multipolar anarchy for these reasons.

In unipolarity, the state-system is dominated by one polity which is more powerful than all others; this great power then rearranges the system to suit its interests.<sup>77</sup> Unipolarity is usually a temporary phase which regresses into multipolarity as weaker states undertake balancing behaviour to form blocs against the great power.<sup>78</sup> Less frequently, unipolarity evolves into hegemony, whereby the great power achieves total preponderance and cannot be challenged by any combination of states within the system.

Around 280 BCE, the Hellenistic state-system settled into a multipolarity dominated by the three great dynasties,<sup>79</sup> who established themselves following four decades of chaotic and constant warfare in the aftermath of Alexander's unexpected death. The western Mediterranean after the Pyrrhic War was ordered by a bipolarity between Carthage and Rome.<sup>80</sup> The ancient Mediterranean therefore was divided in two multipolar anarchies.<sup>81</sup> As neorealism predicts, ancient Mediterranean multipolarity was characterised by constant interstate warfare.<sup>82</sup> In the east, the great dynasties constantly fought one another,<sup>83</sup> while in the west, Rome and Carthage were locked in forty years of hegemonic warfare across the two Punic Wars.

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N.B.: Balance of power maintained by two states is termed 'bipolarity'; 'tripolarity' if maintained by three states; and 'multipolarity' if by four or more states. For simplicity, the present study refers to all three as 'multipolarity,' since the trends seen in multipolarities of four or more states are generally also seen in tripolar and bipolar systems.

<sup>76</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 4, 23-24.

<sup>77</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 2.

<sup>78</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 26-27, 356-60.

<sup>79</sup> Sheila L. Ager, "An Uneasy Balance: from the Death of Seleukos to the Battle of Raphia," in *Blackwell's Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. A. Erskine (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 49-50. Cf. William C. Wohlforth, et al. "Testing Balance-of-Power Theory in World History." *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no.2 (2007): 165-66.

<sup>80</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* XXIII.6.: "And it is said at the time of his [Pyrrhus'] departure he looked back at the island [Sicily] and said to those about him: **"My friends, what a wrestling ground for the Carthaginians and Romans we are leaving behind us!"** And this conjecture of his was soon afterwards confirmed." [Own emphasis.]

<sup>81</sup> Eckstein, "Intra-Greek Balancing, the Mediterranean Crisis of c.201-200 BCE, and the Rise of Rome," 78-79.

<sup>82</sup> Daniel Deudney, "'A Republic for Expansion': The Roman Constitution and Empire and Balance-of-Power Theory," in *The Balance of Power in World History*, eds. S.J. Kaufman, R. Little and W.C. Wohlforth (New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 166-67.

<sup>83</sup> For instance, the Ptolemies and Seleucids fought nine Syrian Wars between 301 – 100 BCE. (Grainger, *The Syrian Wars*, 6-7.)

The contrast Polybius drew between multipolarity in 264 and Roman hegemony in 168 is notable. The characteristics of Roman hegemony in his account match the neorealist understanding of hegemony.<sup>84</sup> His impressed comments on the establishment of Roman hegemony attest to this: it was a “thing unique in history” because unlike previous great powers,<sup>85</sup> the Romans had subjected “nearly the whole of the world” to their rule.<sup>86</sup> He clarified that Rome in 168 “possess[ed] an empire which... need not fear rivalry in the future.”<sup>87</sup> Through ancient scholars identifying bipolarity and hegemony as distinct and separate systems, we can understand how polarity in neorealism relates to understanding the Hellenistic Period.

## 2.6 Power-transition crises and hegemonic war

Power-transitions occur at the unit level within individual states as well as at the structure level within state-systems. Unit-level power-transitions are significant because the sudden rise or decline of a state’s power can profoundly affect the system. Unexpected changes to a state’s capabilities upsets the systemic balance of power. Shifts in the balance of power force a re-structuring of the state-system to reflect the reality of power distribution. ‘Power-transition crisis’ refers to this phenomenon.

Aggressive military action is a predictable state response to a power-transition crisis,<sup>88</sup> triggering ‘hegemonic war.’ Hegemonic war is a conflict where the “hierarchy of power and relations among states in the system” is at stake.<sup>89</sup> In other words, hegemonic war is a consequence of a power-transition crisis;<sup>90</sup> it is one way that crises are resolved. Hegemonic warfare is distinguished from general warfare through its larger scale (typically most states in the system are involved) and heightened stakes.<sup>91</sup> The outcome is a restructuring of the distribution of power across the system, which restores stability. This

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<sup>84</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 40: “A hegemon is a state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system. No other state has the military wherewithal to put up a serious fight against it.”

<sup>85</sup> Such as the Persian Empire, Sparta, and Alexander’s Macedon. (Polybius, *The Histories* I.2.2 – 8.)

<sup>86</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* I.1.4 – 7.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, 105-07.

<sup>89</sup> Robert Gilpin, “The Theory of Hegemonic War.” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no.4 (1988): 592-93.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 601-02. Cf. Arthur M. Eckstein, “Thucydides, the Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, and the Foundation of International Systems Theory.” *The International History Review*, 25, no.4 (2003): 759.

<sup>91</sup> Gilpin, “The Theory of Hegemonic War,” 600.

new distribution may be a fresh multipolarity or a transition to unipolarity/hegemony. Neorealism concludes that systemic stability is short-lived, and it is never long before the pressures of anarchy begin to strain the viability of the new balance of power.

Polybius focuses on two power-transition crises spanning 220 – 168 BCE – the fifty-three year period he alludes to at the outset of his work in which the Romans achieved hegemony.<sup>92</sup> These power-transition crises initiated two hegemonic wars: the Second Punic War in the west, and the Roman wars against the Macedonians and Seleucids in the east. They were ultimately resolved by the advent of Roman hegemony.

The Second Punic War can be defined as a hegemonic war because it re-ordered the western Mediterranean state-system, it forced the integration of the eastern and western state-systems, and it shaped the behaviour of neutral states on the periphery of the conflict. Prior to its outbreak, the western Mediterranean state-system had been a bipolarity between Rome and Carthage.<sup>93</sup> It was evident that the western Mediterranean would shift from bipolarity to hegemony upon the war's conclusion. A speech Polybius attributed to Agelaus,<sup>94</sup> the *strategos* of the Aetolian League, shows that Greek politicians understood its gravity:

“Whether the Carthaginians beat the Romans or the Romans the Carthaginians in this war... the victors... are sure to come here [Greece] and extend their ambitions beyond the bounds of justice.”<sup>95</sup>

This speech was made at a conference during the Social War to an audience comprised of numerous Greek statesmen. Agelaus directly addressed Philip V of Macedon during his oration and cited the Second Punic War as the main reason to immediately end the Social War. Agelaus in effect claimed that this war was important enough to determine state decisions in Greece, even though Greek states were not involved in the conflict.

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<sup>92</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* I.1.5.

<sup>93</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* XXIII.6.: “And it is said at the time of his [Pyrrhus'] departure he looked back at the island [Sicily] and said to those about him: “My friends, what a wrestling ground for the Carthaginians and Romans we are leaving behind us!” And this conjecture of his was soon afterwards confirmed.”

<sup>94</sup> There has been much scholarly debate on the historicity of Agelaus' speech. Walbank (*A Historical Commentary on Polybius, Volume I*, 629) concluded in Polybius' favour, stating that the transcript was “likely to be based on a contemporary record.” It is not impossible that Polybius misquoted Agelaus, but the likelihood of the transcript accurately recording the fundamentals of his speech is “beyond question.” (Craigie Champion, “The Nature of Authoritative Evidence in Polybius and Agelaus' Speech at Naupactus.” *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 127 (1997): 118, 126.)

<sup>95</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* V.104.3 – 5.

Polybius also appended his analysis to the transcript,<sup>96</sup> which shows that he believed the Second Punic War forced the integration of the two Mediterranean systems. Where previously smaller Greek states would have turned to one of the great Hellenistic dynasties for protection and conflict-resolution, by the late 200s they looked to Rome. Rome's incorporation into the Hellenistic state-system meant that future crises in the eastern Mediterranean would influence Roman decisions; therefore, the Second Punic War marked the beginning of Mediterranean interconnection.

The second power-transition crisis in Polybius was triggered by the collapse of the Ptolemaic kingdom from 207 onwards, which led to the Macedonian and Seleucid kings concluding a pact to destroy the dynasty and divide its territory between them. The Ptolemaic collapse plunged the entire eastern Mediterranean, from Gaza to Greece, into hegemonic warfare. The present study contends that this crisis was the catalyst for Rome's entry into the east Mediterranean. We now analyse the fundamental cause of the emergence of Roman hegemony by applying power-transition theory.

### 3. The Mediterranean power-transition crisis

#### 3.1 Ptolemaic collapse

The Ptolemaic state suffered a sudden disintegration of power from 207/206 onwards. The root causes stemmed from domestic maladministration dating back several decades – chiefly, the dissatisfaction of the native Egyptian population with Hellenistic rule. Administrative failure and Greek cultural insensitivity fostered Egyptian discontent with the regime. Letters addressed to Ptolemaic administrators highlight the abuses Egyptians suffered at the hands of Greeks. These letters demonstrate ethnic tension as well as administrative weakness and the limitations of sovereign authority. They also show that natives lacked effective legal avenues to redress their grievances with the administration.<sup>97</sup> These underlying pressures from the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century would play a major role in the Ptolemaic collapse.

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<sup>96</sup> The speech: Ibid., V.104.4 – 7. Polybius' analysis: V.105.4 – 8. See appendix below, Chapter 3 nos. 8, 9.

<sup>97</sup> "Letter of complaint to Zenon from a non-Greek (ca 256-255)," and "Letter to Zenon from two *hierodouloi* of Boubastis," in *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest: A selection of ancient sources in translation*, ed. M.M. Astin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 418-19. See appendix below, chapter 3 nos. 14 & 15 for the contents.

The state became incapable of projecting power beyond its borders when a native uprising erupted in 207. Polybius traced its cause to Ptolemy IV Philopator's decision to recruit 22,000 Egyptians during the Fourth Syrian War,<sup>98</sup> a significant moment as it was the first time that natives had served in a Ptolemaic phalanx. This newfound military strength empowered the Egyptians to claim their independence. The veterans led the revolt, creating a rebel state in Upper Egypt that lasted until 186. Upper Egypt was a valuable region; it was rich in gold and marble,<sup>99</sup> and laid on the trade route to southern African kingdoms.<sup>100</sup> Its loss was therefore disastrous for the Ptolemaic state.<sup>101</sup> Numismatic evidence shows the economic impact this caused: copper coinage was increasingly used from 210 onwards while use of silver coinage sharply diminished.<sup>102</sup> François Chamoux concluded that these economic consequences had "a serious effect on future Ptolemaic policies."<sup>103</sup> The Ptolemaic state no longer had the resources required to maintain its status as a first-tier power in the east Mediterranean.

These problems intensified with Ptolemy's death in 204. His son, Ptolemy V Epiphanes, was crowned aged five. State control fell to a series of regents, none of whom managed to reverse the collapse. The regencies of Sosibius and Agathocles were severely detrimental. Alexandria descended into chaos as they murdered their political rivals and plotted to seize the throne; savage episodes of rioting and mob violence in response showed that the caretaker regime was incapable of controlling even the capital,<sup>104</sup> let alone suppressing the revolt in Upper Egypt. But the most damaging act of the regents was making the state's weakness public knowledge. They despatched envoys to the Macedonian and Seleucid kings, who begged Antiochus to honour the peace sworn at the end of the Fourth Syrian War; and urged Philip to betroth his daughter to Ptolemy V and requested his military protection against Antiochus.<sup>105</sup> Publicly revealing state weakness

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<sup>98</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* V.107.1 – 3.

<sup>99</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* III.12.

<sup>100</sup> François Chamoux, *Hellenistic Civilization*, trans. Michel Roussel (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 103.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. Cf. Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 290-91; Heinen "The Syrian-Egyptian Wars and the new kingdoms of Asia Minor," 438; El'Azar Galili, "Raphia 217 B.C.E. Revisited." *Scripta Classica Israelica* 3 (1976/77): 121-25; and Jouget, *Macedonian Imperialism and the Hellenization of the East*, 218.

<sup>102</sup> Chamoux, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 103.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* XV.25.1 – 2., 5 – 9. Cf. Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* XXX.2.6 – 8.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. XV.25.13 – 14.

can have catastrophic consequences in anarchic systems, as Eckstein stressed. The act alerted the Mediterranean world to the complete collapse of Ptolemaic power.<sup>106</sup>

Ptolemaic collapse initiated a power-transition crisis because all states now recognised that the balance of power was broken. The crisis escalated due to the pact between Antiochus and Philip to destroy the Ptolemaic state and divide its territory between them. Instead of honouring the desperate appeals of the envoys, the two monarchs ruthlessly colluded to destroy the tottering Ptolemaic state.

### 3.2 The Macedonian - Seleucid Pact

Polybius made the pact between Antiochus and Philip the centrepiece of his analysis.<sup>107</sup> He referenced it several times in the extant text,<sup>108</sup> and Livy upheld his views on the subject.<sup>109</sup> The pact is fundamental to his explanation of Rome's entry into the Greek world.<sup>110</sup> Unfortunately, his account of the pact's specific workings is fragmentary. The most sophisticated extant discussion appears in his condemnation of the monarchs for their immorality in taking advantage of the Ptolemaic child-ruler.<sup>111</sup> Walbank noted that Polybius, by labelling their conduct in this passage as "worse than that of tyrants," depicted the two kings in the worst terms that he could imagine.<sup>112</sup>

Polybius' assessment of the pact is among the most contentious issues in modern scholarship on Roman imperialism. Harris denied the pact's existence, arguing that it was a Rhodian fabrication.<sup>113</sup> Badian similarly dismissed it as mere rumour.<sup>114</sup> Errington proposed that Polybius had mistaken an informal local agreement between Zeuxis and Philip for a formal treaty between Antiochus and Philip.<sup>115</sup> Walbank supported the pact's existence, but stated that Polybius exaggerated its scope.<sup>116</sup> And Gruen conceded its

<sup>106</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 143-45. Cf. Chamoux, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 105.

<sup>107</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 132-37.

<sup>108</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* III.2.8.; XIV.1a.4 – 5.; XV.20.1 – 4.

<sup>109</sup> Livy, *From the founding of the city* XXXI.14.4 – 5.

<sup>110</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* XV.20.6 – 7. Polybius here invokes the metaphor of Fortune alerting the Romans to Macedonian – Seleucid aggression. He was alluding to the embassies sent by numerous Greek states to the Romans, not literally explaining Rome's entry into the Hellenistic world by reference to the workings of a metaphysical force.

<sup>111</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* XV.20.1 – 4. See below appendix, chapter 3 no. 12.

<sup>112</sup> Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius, Volume II*, 473.

<sup>113</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 212-13.

<sup>114</sup> Ernst Badian, *Foreign Clientelae (264–70 B.C.)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 64.

<sup>115</sup> R. Malcolm Errington, "The Alleged Syro-Macedonian Pact and the Origins of the Second Macedonian War." *Athenaeum* 49 (1971): 336-54.

<sup>116</sup> Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius, Volume II*, 472.

authenticity, but argued that it had minimal political impact.<sup>117</sup> Eckstein, however, reached the clearest interpretation. He identified that failure to unreservedly accept Polybius means that “we must revise our assessment of Polybius as a historical thinker radically downward.”<sup>118</sup> This point seems to have eluded the scholars who adopted a revisionist approach: rejecting Polybius on the pact means we must repudiate him entirely, because his belief in the pact’s authenticity and its political importance anchored his entire work.<sup>119</sup>

It is highly unlikely that Polybius was mistaken because he prided himself on factual accuracy and demanded it from others. Factual inaccuracy was a recurring theme in his criticism of his contemporaries.<sup>120</sup> For instance, Polybius launched a scathing attack on another historian, Philinus of Agrigentum, for basing his work on a fictitious treaty; this appears only a few sections after Polybius first mentioned the pact between Antiochus and Philip.<sup>121</sup> We must also consider the severe criticism Polybius reserved for the kings,<sup>122</sup> and his assertion that the pact was common knowledge.<sup>123</sup> Given the boldness of these pronouncements, it is far-fetched to suggest that he did not have solid evidence for the pact, since he voluntarily staked his reputation and integrity on accuracy by ridiculing historians who fabricated treaties. These factors strongly indicate that his account of the pact was based on authoritative sources.

Moreover, an inscription recently discovered in Turkey corroborates Polybius’ claims.<sup>124</sup> It has been identified as a Rhodian government document and dated to c.195 BCE.<sup>125</sup> The inscription records Philip’s capture of Theangela during his invasion of Caria in autumn 201,<sup>126</sup> and documents Antiochus capturing multiple cities in the region.<sup>127</sup> Eckstein argued that the inscription shows Philip giving Theangela to Antiochus shortly after he took it, and further noted that the gift coincided with Zeuxis’ crucial logistical

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<sup>117</sup> Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome, Volume II*, 387-88.

<sup>118</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 131.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-38.

<sup>120</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* I.14. – 15.; III.8., 9.1 – 5.; XVI.20. See appendix, chapter 3 no.17.

<sup>121</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* III.26.3 – 7. The pact between the kings is first mentioned at III.2.8. For his criticism of Philinus, see appendix, chapter 3 no.16.

<sup>122</sup> *Supra*, no.116.

<sup>123</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* XIV.1a.4 – 5.

<sup>124</sup> Jeremy LaBuff, *Polis Expansion and Elite Power in Hellenistic Karia* (London: Lexington Books, 2015), 124-28.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-28. The campaign is discussed above in greater detail at chapter 1, no. 52.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.: “... those (sent) from King Antiochos took control of the [community X] and the Thodoseans before [Y] (sent) from King Philip [verb] Theangela...”

support to the Macedonians that had averted their surrender.<sup>128</sup> Eckstein asserted that the inscription provides compelling evidence for the pact's existence and political significance. The inscription proves that Rhodes knew of the kings' simultaneous attacks on Ptolemaic holdings in Asia Minor; therefore, the present study unreservedly accepts Polybius' analysis.

Neorealist analysis stands without needing reference to the pact. We do not need to show the existence of a pact between the kings to deduce that their aggressions against the Ptolemies signalled the outbreak of a hegemonic war. Their attacks were widespread: Philip operated in the Aegean whilst Antiochus focused on the Levant, and both invaded Asia Minor.<sup>129</sup> Their dismemberment of Ptolemaic territory endangered smaller Greek states throughout the Mediterranean. This is shown by the alliance between Rhodes and Pergamon, who set aside their historical enmity to secure themselves against the far greater threat of Macedonian – Seleucid aggression.<sup>130</sup> These are strong indicators of hegemonic warfare.

However, neorealism's value for comprehending the outcome is enhanced by the existence of the pact, because it enables better understanding of individual state decisions. Knowledge of the pact's existence explains why several Greek states sent embassies to Rome in 201/200.<sup>131</sup> The Macedonian – Seleucid coalition exacerbated the security dilemma for second-tier Greek states. Since they were threatened by an aggressive alliance between two expansionist states, they could not attempt to balance one against the other; nor could they balance against the coalition by aligning with the ailing Ptolemaic dynasty. Instead, they were forced to turn to a state on the periphery of the east Mediterranean: Rome.

### 3.3 Roman intervention

As Antiochus and Philip expanded rapidly between 202 – 200, it seemed inevitable that the east Mediterranean would fall under their domination. Only three states resisted them: Pergamon, Rhodes, and the Ptolemies. Of these, the Ptolemies were entirely ineffectual, as underlined by Antiochus' crushing victory against their army at Panium in

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<sup>128</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 177-78. For further discussion on Zeuxis' importance, see above chapter 1, no.52.

<sup>129</sup> Discussed above chapter 1, section 4.

<sup>130</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 195-96.

<sup>131</sup> *Supra*, no. 119.



200; and Pergamon and Rhodes could only restrain Philip with great difficulty. They could not possibly withstand a united Macedonian and Seleucid effort. By 201, the smaller Greek states understood that they had only one way to preserve their independence – appealing to Rome.

Four Greek states despatched envoys to Rome – Athens, Pergamon, Rhodes and the Ptolemies. Their aim was to secure Roman intervention in the ongoing hegemonic war, a classic example of buck-passing. Each embassy denounced the kings and warned the Senate of the threat that their expansion posed. The Senate accepted the Greek pleas and sent an embassy to Philip in 200 ordering him to cease aggression and surrender his recent conquests. Philip refused, and the Second Macedonian War begun, marking Rome's entry into the Hellenistic world.

Rome's agreement to the Greek pleas is central to our discussion. Exceptionalist arguments contend that the Greek embassies offered the belligerent Roman aristocracy the required pretext for conquest. Though Macedonian power had increased, there was no legitimate reason for Rome to fear it; after all, when Rome first received the envoys, Philip was blockaded in Asia Minor and could hardly have appeared less menacing.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, the primary reason for Roman intervention was the aristocracy's relentless pursuit of military glory.<sup>133</sup> A second reason was the desire to punish Philip for his alliance with Hannibal during the Second Punic War.<sup>134</sup>

However, the decision to intervene was primarily based on the systemic conditions and not on Roman internal structures. Hegemonic warfare is strategically important to all states because it restructures the distribution of power in a state-system. Given a hegemonic war was underway, Rome had a great opportunity to magnify its power and secure itself in the integrated Mediterranean state-system. Intervention was therefore in Rome's best interest strategically. Roman elites calculated that the benefits of intervention far outweighed the costs of non-intervention, based on the systemic conditions and the state's capability.

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<sup>132</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 214-15.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 217-18: "The resounding defeat of Carthage made war with Philip possible, and indeed **a new outlet was now needed, for a certain section of the aristocracy**, including the consul Sulpicius, was entitled **to the opportunities of war.**" [Own emphasis.]

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 216.

Harris convincingly argued that fear was not a motive since there was no immediate threat from the east – neither Philip nor Antiochus had shown any serious intent to invade Italy. But his focus on Roman internal structures overlooks the anarchic structure of the ancient Mediterranean. Fear is not the only motivation for states to deploy military force during crises. Anarchy made intervention potentially rewarding, and non-intervention potentially detrimental. Non-intervention would have produced negative long-term consequences, as Rome would be forced to contend against a vastly powerful Macedonian or Seleucid state.<sup>135</sup> Successful intervention, conversely, could establish Rome as a key player in the east. Rome had the power to justify an aggressive response, and the elimination of Carthage as a powerful regional rival meant Rome also had the freedom for aggressive intervention.

This combination of state power and systemic conditions was the cause of Roman intervention in the east Mediterranean.<sup>136</sup> Internal structures are insignificant since Roman militarism itself was a natural reaction to the brutal conditions of multipolar anarchy.<sup>137</sup> It is much more pertinent to examine Roman capability than Roman culture: powerful states adopt expansionism because they have the means to do so. Weaker states such as Rhodes and Pergamon can adopt expansionism if the conditions favour it,<sup>138</sup> but are usually forced to balance due to their lesser capability.

This is the key difference between neorealism and the ‘defensive imperialism’ framework forwarded by some historians. For instance, Maurice Holleaux argued that Roman intervention was purely defensive;<sup>139</sup> that is, Rome perceived a genuine threat from the east and acted to protect itself. Though his focus on the system was methodologically correct, Holleaux gave too much weight to systemic conditions and did not adequately consider the powerful capabilities of the Roman state. Roman exceptionalism goes too far in the opposite direction: Roman internal attributes are stressed, and systemic conditions

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<sup>135</sup> Eckstein (*Rome Enters the Greek East*, 239-40) noted that if either Philip or Antiochus added Egypt to their domains, Rome would have had to contend against a state two or three times more powerful and resourceful than Carthage had been.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>137</sup> *Supra*, no. 12.: “States must meet the demands of the political eco-system or court annihilation.”

<sup>138</sup> As they did in the aftermath of the Roman – Seleucid War, following which the Seleucids were considerably weakened.

<sup>139</sup> Maurice Holleaux, “Rome and Philip: Philip against the Romans.” In *The Cambridge Ancient History, Volume VIII: Rome and the Mediterranean, 218 - 133 B.C.*, ed. S.A. Cook, F.E. Adcock, M.P. Charlesworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930, first edition), 116-97. Cf. Holleaux, “Rome and Antiochus,” as above, 199-239.

are downplayed. Neorealism synthesizes these opposing views to produce the best answer: states are driven to maximise power because of the harshness of anarchy. For powerful states such as Rome, the ultimate solution to the security dilemma is establishing hegemony;<sup>140</sup> in other words, imperialism is driven by the anarchic structure of the system.

Rome's involvement in the east Mediterranean crisis was certainly an aggressive decision, but the Seleucids and Macedonians precipitated the crisis through their own aggression. All first-tier powers saw an opportunity to increase their influence and each attempted to do so by aggressive warfare. State behaviour during the east Mediterranean crisis of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century is consistent with power-transition theory in neorealism.

#### 4. Roman power from 197 to 168 BCE

The defeat of Philip in 197 did not mark the beginning of Roman hegemony. After the Second Macedonian War, the Mediterranean entered an unstable bipolarity between the two remaining great powers, Rome and the Seleucids. As Badian wrote, a state of cold war existed between them from 196,<sup>141</sup> which escalated into a hegemonic war in 192. Following the defeat of the Seleucids, Rome established unipolarity in the Mediterranean. But its position would not evolve to hegemony until the conclusion of the Third Macedonian War.

##### 4.1 From bipolarity to unipolarity: The Roman – Seleucid War

Roman politicians debated how to manage the Seleucids. Scipio Africanus argued in favour of maintaining a military presence in Greece to deter Antiochus from further expansion. Flamininus conversely argued that the best deterrent was securing Greek support against Antiochus, which required Rome's complete withdrawal due to his proclamation of Greek freedom.<sup>142</sup> The Senate adopted Flamininus' approach, and all Roman forces withdrew by 194. This move backfired as Antiochus was incentivised to encroach further into Europe. As Eckstein observed, Roman withdrawal was highly

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<sup>140</sup> Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism," 81: "States should maximise power, and their ultimate goal should be hegemony, because that is the best way to guarantee survival."

<sup>141</sup> Badian, "Rome and Antiochus the Great," 81.

<sup>142</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 316-17. See above chapter 1, no. 57.

destabilising because of Mediterranean bipolarity: one power's gain is entirely the other's loss.<sup>143</sup>

Rome's military withdrawal from Greece created a dangerous power vacuum. As with the Second Macedonian War, the catalyst for the Roman – Seleucid War emerged from the behaviour of smaller states. This time, the key actors were the Aetolian League and Pergamon. The Aetolians lobbied to Antiochus against the Romans, whilst Pergamon appealed to Rome against Antiochus. The Aetolians were discontent with Rome and attempted forming an anti-Roman coalition in Greece; this failed, but they manipulated Antiochus and promised overwhelming Greek support should he attack the Romans.<sup>144</sup> Pergamon felt threatened by further Seleucid expansion, and their embassies to Rome stressed that Antiochus was compromising order in the east.<sup>145</sup> The Spartan king Nabis also contributed to the destabilisation of Greece by capturing cities that Rome had awarded to the Achaean League.

The Roman – Seleucid War broke out in 192. It was another hegemonic war since it involved most Greek polities in addition to the two major powers. The Greek allies contributed significantly to Roman victory: Rhodian and Pergamene navies inflicted major defeats on the Seleucids;<sup>146</sup> and at the decisive battle of Magnesia, the Pergamene king Eumenes won the day by personally leading the Greek cavalry charge against the Seleucid left flank.<sup>147</sup>

The Seleucids were greatly weakened by the defeat. All of Antiochus' vast gains made since 202 were surrendered to Rome, and the territory was allotted to the Greek allies.<sup>148</sup> Once again, Rome withdrew completely from the east. Though Rome was now by far the strongest state in the Mediterranean, the Greek states interacted with it as equals and not subordinates; they were not beholden to Roman interests and retained

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>144</sup> Livy, *From the founding of the city* XXXV.12. See also chapter 1 above, section 5.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., XXXV.13.7 – 10.: "With all his [Eumenes, the king of Pergamon] prestige and all his diplomatic skill he urged the Romans to war."

<sup>146</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 330-33.

<sup>147</sup> Discussed above, chapter 1 section 6.

<sup>148</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 333. See also appendix, chapter 1 no.2.

independence.<sup>149</sup> Roman unipolarity did not immediately yield complete domination of the Mediterranean.

#### 4.2 From unipolarity to hegemony: The Third Macedonian War

Polybius recorded a debate between the Achaean leaders Philopoemen and Aristaenus, c.185, where they argued over how to interact with Rome.<sup>150</sup> Aristaenus advocated a policy of complete submission to Roman demands, whilst Philopoemen reasoned that the Achaeans should resist any Roman demand not stipulated by treaty.<sup>151</sup> Philopoemen concluded that Roman hegemony was inevitable, but as Roman power was not yet absolute, Greek leaders were duty-bound to resist any overreaching.

That Greek statesmen could still debate these issues shows they had some degree of freedom. By the outbreak of the Third Macedonian War, many Greek elites wished they could preserve *status quo* – unipolarity was preferable to hegemony under the Macedonians or Romans.<sup>152</sup> From 188 to 168, no power was so preponderant that it could force all states to obey it; for Polybius and his contemporaries, unipolarity was an acceptable system because it permitted Greek freedom.<sup>153</sup>

Rome's victory at the battle of Pydna established its hegemony in the Mediterranean. The Macedonian monarchy was disestablished with the defeat. Soon after, Roman hegemony was confirmed by the abrupt end to the Sixth Syrian War. The Seleucid king Antiochus VI Epiphanes stood poised to capture Alexandria, until he was ordered to withdraw by the Roman envoy.<sup>154</sup> Throughout this chapter, we have seen that diplomacy was ineffectual at resolving conflicts in the anarchic Mediterranean; states could only enforce resolutions by military power. On this occasion however, a single Roman senator forced a peaceful resolution. It symbolised the subjugation of the Hellenistic world: the Antigonids of Macedonia were no more; the Ptolemies owed their survival to Roman intervention in 200 and 168; and the Seleucids, the sole remaining dynasty with any significant power, were forced to submit to Roman demands. The minor Greek states also

<sup>149</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* **XXII**.7.5 – 7. This passage shows the Achaeans ignoring instructions from the Senate.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., **XXIV**.11 – 13.9.

<sup>151</sup> See appendix below, chapter 3 no.18.

<sup>152</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* **XXVII**.15.10 – 12.; **XXX**.6.5 – 6. Cf. Livy, *From the founding of the city* **XLII**.30.5 – 6.

<sup>153</sup> Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East*, 370.

<sup>154</sup> Polybius, *The Histories* **XXIX**.27. Cf. Livy, *From the founding of the city* **XLV**.12.

lost their independence: Rhodes was absorbed in 164; the Achaean League was dissolved in 146 and reconstituted as a Roman province; and Pergamon was bequeathed to Rome in 133 by the last Attalid monarch. Mediterranean anarchy had been extinguished by Rome's unchallengeable power.

## 5. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the principles of neorealism in political science and explained how the paradigm relates to ancient history, thereby justifying its application to analysing Roman imperialism. Subsequently the chapter analysed the role of Ptolemaic collapse in triggering a power-transition crisis in the east Mediterranean and explained how this development led to a pact between the Macedonian and Seleucid kings to mutually capture Ptolemaic territory. Their aggression triggered hegemonic warfare and imperilled minor Greek states, who appealed to Rome for intervention. The Romans accepted their pleas and entered the east Mediterranean because of the opportunity present in intervention and the threat in non-intervention. In this way, the characteristics of the system shaped the crucial Roman decision to enter the east. The reason for the creation of Rome's in the east was the power-transition crisis of the late 3<sup>rd</sup> – early 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries.

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# CONCLUSION

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This study proposes that the fundamental cause for the emergence of Roman hegemony was a power-transition crisis in the east Mediterranean. The dominant paradigm in current scholarship identifies militaristic cultural attitudes as the causal agent for Roman imperialism. This view is erroneous at both the historical and theoretical levels. As argued in Chapter II, militaristic attitudes were normal in the ancient Mediterranean. This is evidenced by the widespread diffusion of soldierly brutality, citizen involvement in warfare, and aggressive policies by aristocrats, statesmen and monarchs. The key ancient sources reflect the normality of militarized culture through their preoccupation with organisation as the truly exceptional Roman trait, and their relative disinterest in Roman brutality.

Neorealism challenges the view that state internal structures significantly impact state conduct. Neorealists argue that the anarchy of state-systems forces states to be functionally similar and develop highly militarized internal structures; this is reinforced through historical analysis and explains why militarization was such a widely dispersed phenomenon in the ancient Mediterranean. All states in an anarchy seek to maximise their power because power is the only means of security. Powerful states seek to establish hegemony, whereby no other state can threaten them. Minor states seek to establish balance, whereby one powerful state is always present to protect them against others. Moreover, neorealism posits that state cultures, compared with systemic conditions and individual state capabilities, have insignificant impact in shaping state decisions. Lastly, neorealism contends that wide-scale interstate warfare occurs when a state-system's balance of power becomes untenable. The ensuing wars are contested over the new distribution of power, and states increase their power and standing in the state-system by winning these hegemonic wars. This theoretical framework is expounded and related to ancient history in Chapter III.

Historical analysis confirms the relevance of neorealist theory to understanding interstate relations in the ancient Mediterranean. The decisions taken by individual states as well as the analysis of state behaviour by ancient intellectuals point strongly towards this conclusion. Ancient sources emphasize that Macedon and the Seleucid Empire behaved with exceptional aggression during the east Mediterranean power-transition crisis,



and that their aggression threatened minor states, who appealed to Rome for intervention. This pattern of behaviour is consistent with neorealist theory, as shown in Chapter III.

Therefore, the argument that the emergence of Roman hegemony was shaped by the anarchic structure of the state-system is well supported by the methodology and the historical evidence. The study has accomplished its objectives of investigating why imperialism occurs, and of showing the patterns of continuity in interstate relations between the ancient and modern world.

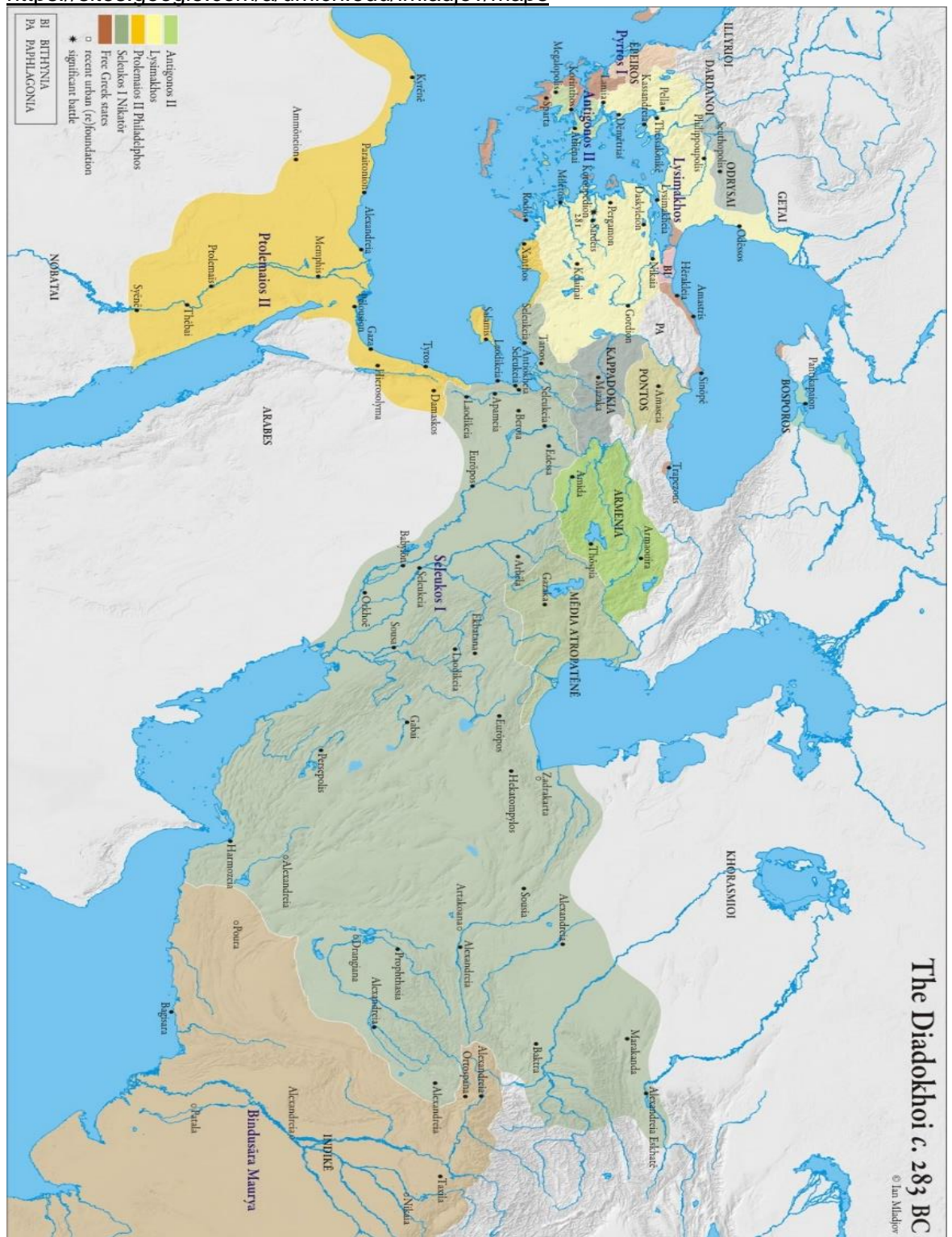
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# APPENDIX

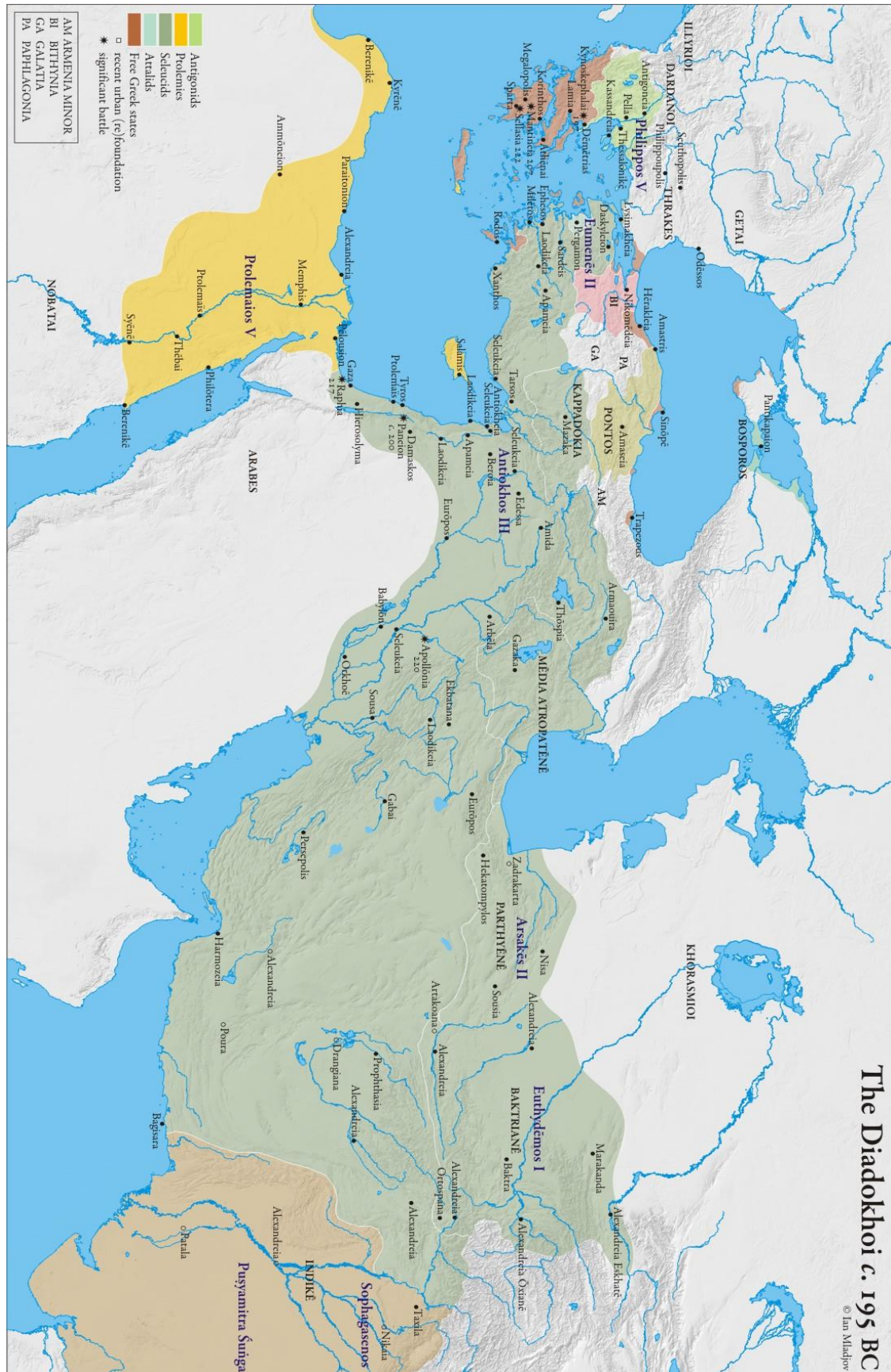
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## Maps

**Map 1** “The *Diadokhoi* c. 283 BC.” © Ian Mjladov.  
<https://sites.google.com/a/umich.edu/imladjov/maps>

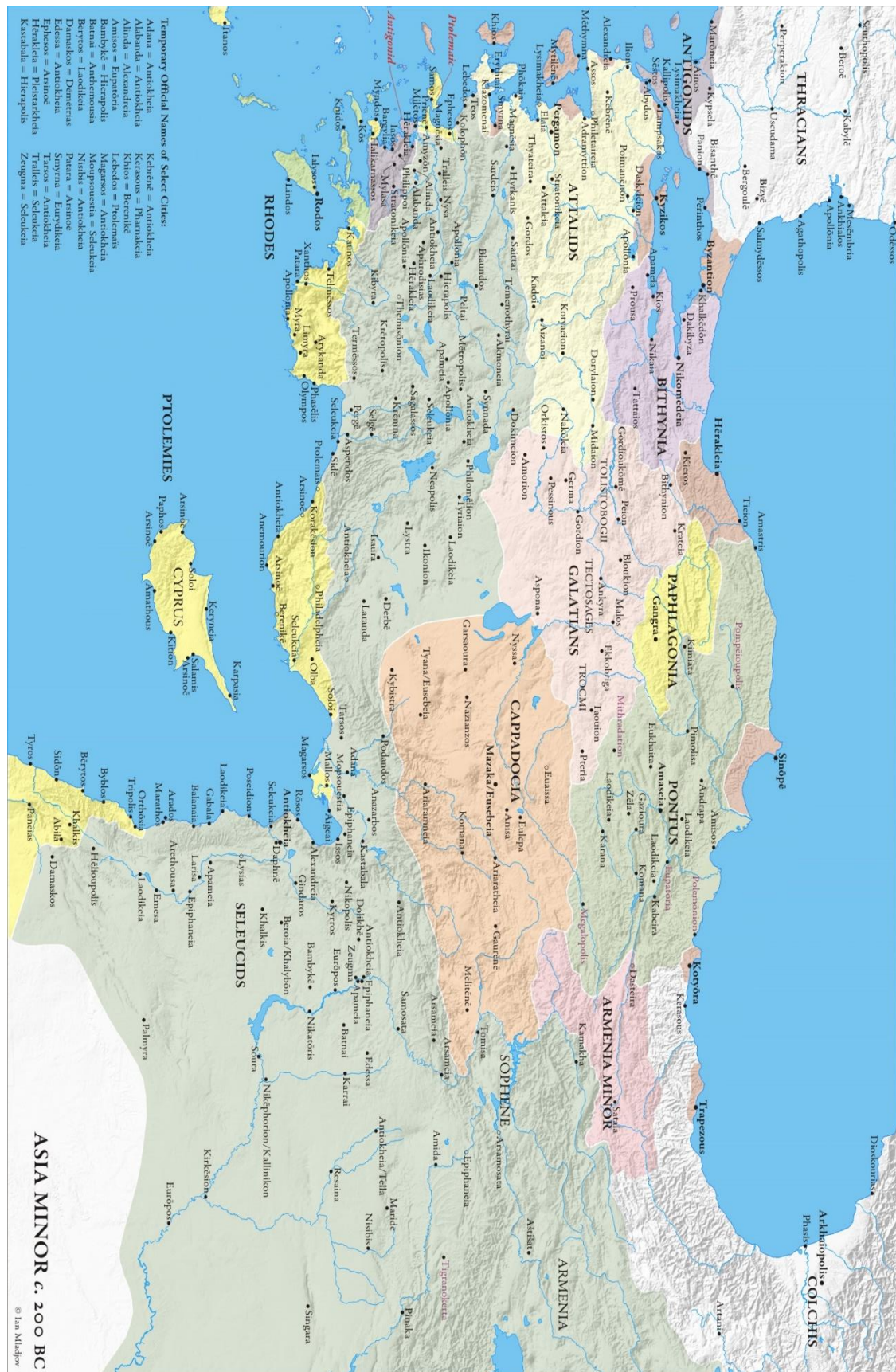


**Map 2** “The *Diadokhoi* c.195 BC.” © Ian Mjladov.  
<https://sites.google.com/a/umich.edu/imladjov/maps>





**Map 3** “Asia Minor c. 200 BC.” © Ian Mjladov.  
<https://sites.google.com/a/umich.edu/imladiov/maps>



## Chapter 1

**1** “Letter of Flamininus to Chyretiai.” In *The Hellenistic Period: Historical Sources in Translation*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall and Peter Derow (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 73-74.

“Titus Quinctius, *strategos hypatos* of the Romans, to the *tagoi* and the city of (the) Chyretians, greeting. Since even in other matters we have made altogether clear to everyone both our own policy toward you and that of the *demos* of the Romans, we wish also in what follows to demonstrate in every respect that we have taken a stand for what is honorable, in order that those who are not in the habit of acting from the best motives may not be able to talk us down in these matters either. As many of your possessions, in land and houses, as remain of those belonging to the public property of the Romans, we grant them all to your city, so that in these matters also you may know our nobility and that in no matter whatsoever have we wished to be greedy, setting the highest premium upon kindness and love of glory. As many as have not recovered what belongs to them, if they prove their case to you and are evidently speaking reasonably, as long as you base your action upon my written decisions, I judge it to be just that (their property) be restored to them. Farewell.”

**2** “Treaty of Apamea.” Rhodian and Attalid gains depicted in light green and blue, respectively.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> “Der Friede von Apameia 188 v. Chr.,” Wikimedia Foundation, last modified June 13, 2007, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Treaty\\_of\\_Apamea.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Treaty_of_Apamea.png)

Chapter 2

1 Plutarch, *Life of Aemilius Paulus* XIX.2 – 3.

“And when he<sup>2</sup> saw that the rest of the Macedonian troops also were drawing their targets from their shoulders round in front of them, and with long spears set at one level were withstanding his shield-bearing troops, and saw too the strength of their interlocked shields and the fierceness of their onset, amazement and fear took possession of him, and he felt that he had never seen a sight more fearful; often in after times he used to speak of his emotions at that time and of what he saw.”

2 Polybius, *The Histories* XXIX.17.1.

“Aemilius the consul, who had never seen a phalanx until this occasion in the war with Perseus, often confessed afterwards to certain persons in Rome that he had never seen anything more terrible and dreadful than a Macedonian phalanx, and this although he had witnessed and directed as many battles as any man.”

3 Polybius, *The Histories* VI.42.1 – 5.

“The Romans by thus studying convenience in this matter pursue, it seems to me, a course diametrically opposite to that usual among the Greeks. The Greeks in encamping think it of primary importance to adapt the camp to the natural advantages of the ground, first because they shirk the labour of entrenching, and next because they think artificial defences are not equal in value to the fortifications which nature provides unaided on the spot. So that as regards the plan of the camp as a whole they are obliged to adopt all kinds of shapes to suit the nature of the ground, and they often have to shift the parts of the army to unsuitable situations, the consequence being that everyone is quite uncertain whereabouts in the camp his own place or the place of his corps is. The Romans on the contrary prefer to submit to the fatigue of entrenching and other defensive work for the sake of the convenience of having a single type of camp which never varies and is familiar to all.”

4 Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* XXXVIII.10.1 – 4.

“There was as much provision in it<sup>3</sup> for luxurious living as for fighting a campaign; 80,000 men-at-arms were attended by 300,000 camp-followers, most of whom were cooks and bakers. Certainly, there was so much silver and gold that even the common soldiers used hobnails of

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<sup>2</sup> Aemilius.

<sup>3</sup> The Seleucid army.

gold in their boots... Cooking vessels, too, were of silver, as if they were proceeding to a banquet rather than a war.”

**5 Table of Roman Censors, 280 – 168 BCE. Own work.**

Excluding the censors for the years 210 & 209 – 205 (highlighted in red), all censors had previously been consuls; and even these exceptions would later serve as consuls. Only three censors out of the 54 who held the office during the thesis’ scope stood to gain political capital from conquest, and none of those three had important military careers; the remaining 51 had already attained the highest honours in the Roman political system and simply had no need of further *gloria*.



Year (BCE, Inclusive)	Censors elected	Years served as consul (BCE)	Source
280 - 276	L. Cornelius Scipio Barbatus	298	Livy, Book 13 Abstract ( <i>Periochae</i> )
	Cn. Domitius Calvinus Maximus	283	
275 - 272	C. Fabricius Luscinius	282, 278	Livy, Book 14 Abstract ( <i>Periochae</i> )
	Q. Aemilius Papus	282, 278	
271 - 270	M. Curius Dentatus	290, 275, 274	Frontinus, <i>Roman Aqueducts</i> I.6
	L. Papirius Censor	293, 272	
269 - 266	L. Aemilius Barbula	281	<i>Fasti Capitolini</i>
	Q. Marcius Phillipus	281	
265 - 259	Cn. Cornelius Blasio	270, 257	Livy, XLVII.2; Plutarch, <i>Coriolanus</i> I.1
	C. Marcius Rutilus Censorinus	310	
258 - 254	C. Duilius	260	<i>Fasti Capitolini</i>
	L. Cornelius Scipio	259	
253	D. Iunius Pera	266	<i>Fasti Capitolini</i>
	L. Postumius	262	
252 - 248	M. Valerius Maximus Messalla	263	Livy, Book 17 Abstract ( <i>Periochae</i> )
	P. Sempronius Sophus	268	
247 - 242	A. Atilius Calatinus	258, 254	<i>Fasti Capitolini</i>
	A. Manlius Torquatus Atticus	244, 241	
241 - 237	C. Aurelius Cotta	252, 248	Livy, XXIII.22.10
	M. Fabius Buteo	245	
236 - 235	L. Cornelius Lentulus Caudinus	237	<i>Fasti Capitolini</i>
	Q. Lutatius Cerco	241	
234 - 232	C. Atilius Bulbus	245, 235	<i>Fasti Capitolini</i>
	A. Postumius Albinus	242	
231	T. Manlius Torquatus	235, 224	Livy, XXIII.30.18
	Q. Fuvius Flaccus	237, 224, 212, 209	
230 - 226	Q. Fabius Maximus Cunctator	233, 228, 215, 214, 209	<i>Fasti Capitolini</i>
	M. Sempronius Tuditanus	240	
225 - 221	C. Claudius Centho	240	<i>Fasti Capitolini</i>
	M. Iunius Pera	230	
220 - 215	L. Aemilius Papus	225	Livy, XXIII.22.3, 22.5; XXIV.11.7.
	C. Flaminius	223, 217	
214 - 211	M. Atilius Regulus	227, 217	Livy, XXIV.11.6, 18.1-6., 43.2-4.
	P. Furius Philus	223	
210	L. Veturius Philo	217	Livy, XXVII.6.17.
	P. Licinius Crassus Dives	205	
209 - 205	M. Cornelius Cethegus	204	Livy, XXVII.11.7
	P. Sempronius Tuditanus	204	
204 - 200	M. Livius Salinator	219, 207	Livy, XXIX.37.1-17.
	C. Claudius Nero	207	
199 - 195	P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus	205, 203, 202	Livy, XXXII.7.2-3.
	P. Aelius Paetus	201	
194 - 190	Sex. Aelius Paetus Catus	198	Livy, XXXIV.44.4-5; XXV.9.1.
	C. Cornelius Cethegus	197	
189 - 185	T. Quinctius Flaminius	198	Livy, XXXVII.57.10, 58.2.
	M. Claudius Marcellus	196	
184 - 180	L. Valerius Flaccus	195	Livy, XXIX.30.2.; Plutarch, <i>Cato the Elder</i> XVI
	M. Porcius Cato	195	
179 - 175	M. Aemilius Lepidus	187, 175	Livy, XL.51.1-9.
	M. Fulvius Nobilior	189	
174 - 170	Q. Fulvius Flaccus	179	Livy, XLI.27.1.; XLII.10.1; XLIII.16.2.
	A. Postumius Albinus	180	
169 - 165	C. Claudius Pulcher	177	Livy, XLIII.14-16.; XLIV.16.8-11.
	Ti. Sempronius Gracchus	177, 163	

6 “Honours for the ephebes of 204/3 and their officers,” trans. Stephen Lambert. In *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum Volume XXVI (1976-1977)*, ed. H.W. Pleket and R.S. Stroud (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 98.

“The ephebes... were continuously well-disciplined in the gymnasia... and made the demonstration in arms... and took care of the guarding of cities, obeying the generals and their commander... and carried through in a well-disciplined manner their training with weapons... and fitted themselves to become good future contenders on behalf of their fatherland.”

7 Silver stater. Pamphylia, Aspendos. c. 380 – 325 BCE. Obverse: Two wrestlers grappling. Reverse: ΕΣΤΦΕΔΙΙΥΣ/ESTFEDIIUS (Aspendos); Slinger in throwing stance. © Classical Numismatic Group.

<https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=235460>



**8** Silver tetradrachm of Antiochus the Great. Seleucid Empire, c.222-187 BCE.  
Obverse: Diademed head of Antiochus the Great. Reverse: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ  
ANTIOXOY/BASILEOS ANTIOCHOU (of the king Antiochus); Indian war elephant.  
[http://dcc.dickinson.edu/sites/all/files/Antiochus\\_III\\_coin.JPG](http://dcc.dickinson.edu/sites/all/files/Antiochus_III_coin.JPG)



**9** Silver tetradrachm of Antiochus the Great. Seleucid Empire, c.203 BCE.  
Obverse: Diademed head of Antiochus the Great. Reverse: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ  
ANTIOXOY/BASILEOS ANTIOCHOU (of the king Antiochus); Apollo seated left on  
omphalos, testing arrow in right hand, left hand on grounded bow behind grip  
marked with three pellets.  
<https://www.coinarchives.com/a/lotviewer.php?LotID=1354877&AucID=2738&Lot=30197&Val=d92ee839ec02fde9e4c2431f6f389462>





**10** Silver tetradrachm of Seleucus Nicator. Pergamon, Seleucid Empire, c.281 BCE. Obverse: Head of warhorse. Reverse: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ/BASILEOS SELEUKOU (of the king Seleucus); Indian war elephant. © Hartmann Linge, Wikimedia Commons, CC-by-sa 3.0.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:201209071746a\\_Berlin\\_Pergamonmuseum,\\_Tetradrachme\\_Seleukos%27\\_I,\\_Silber,\\_Pergamon,\\_281-280\\_v.u.Z.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:201209071746a_Berlin_Pergamonmuseum,_Tetradrachme_Seleukos%27_I,_Silber,_Pergamon,_281-280_v.u.Z.jpg)



**11** Angelos Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, 46-47.

“I swear by Hestia [‘Hearth’], who is in the magistrate’s hall, and by Zeus, the patron of the assembly, and by Zeus of the Tallaian Mountains, and by Apollo Delphinios, and by Athena, the patron of the citadel, and by Apollo Pythios, and by Lato, and by Artemis, and by Ares, and by Aphrodite, and by Hermes, and by the Sun, and by Britomarpis, and by Phoinix, and by Amphione, and by the Earth, and by the Sky, and by the male and female heroes, and by the water sources, and by the rivers, and by all gods and goddesses; truly, I will never be benevolent towards the Lyttians, in no way and through no pretension, neither by day nor by night; and I will try, to the best of my capacity, to harm the city of the Lyttians.”

**12** Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* I.77.

“I will not bring dishonor on my sacred arms nor will I abandon my comrade wherever I shall be stationed. I will defend the rights of gods and men and will not leave my country smaller, when I die, but greater and better, so far as I am able by myself and with the help of all. I will respect the rulers of the time duly and the existing ordinances duly and all others which may be established in the future. And if anyone seeks to destroy the ordinances I will oppose him so far as I am able by myself and with the help of all. I will honor the cults of my fathers. Witnesses to this shall be the gods Agraulus, Hestia, Enyo, Enyalios, Ares, Athena the Warrior,

Zeus, Thallo, Auxo, Hegemone, Heracles, and the boundaries of my native land, wheat, barley, vines, olive-trees, fig-trees. . .”

**13 Cicero, *Pro Lucius Morena* IX.22 – XI.24.**

"How can it be doubted that the glory of military exploits contributes more dignity to aid in the acquisition of consulship, than renown for skill in civil law? Do you wake before the night is over in order to give answers to those who consult you? He has done so in order to arrive betimes with his army at the place to which he is marching. The cook-crow wakens you, but the sound of the trumpet rouses him: you conduct an action; he is marshaling an army: you take care lest your clients should be convicted; he lest his cities or camp be taken. He occupies posts, and exercises skill to repel the troops of the enemy, you to keep out the rain; he is practised in extending the boundaries of the empire, you in governing the present territories; and in short, for I must say what I think, pre-eminence in military skill excels all other virtues."

"The highest dignity is in those men who excel in military glory. For all things which are in the empire and in the constitution of the state, are supposed to be defended and strengthened by them. There is also the greatest usefulness in them, since it is by their wisdom and their danger that we can enjoy both the republic and also our own private possessions."

**14 Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* VIII.1 – 3.**

"This conflict<sup>4</sup> did not fill the Macedonians with wrath and hate towards Pyrrhus for their losses, rather it led those who beheld his exploits and engaged him in the battle to esteem him highly and admire his bravery and talk much about him. For they likened his aspect and his swiftness and all his motions to those of the great Alexander, and thought they saw in him shadows, as it were, and intimations of that leader's impetuosity and might in conflicts. The other kings, they said, represented Alexander with their purple robes, their body-guards, the inclination of their necks, and their louder tones in conversation; but Pyrrhus, and Pyrrhus alone, in arms and action.

Of his knowledge and ability in the field of military tactics and leadership one may get proofs from the writings on these subjects which he left. It is said also that Antigonus,<sup>5</sup> when asked who was the best general, replied "Pyrrhus, if he lives to be old." This verdict of Antigonus applied only to his contemporaries. Hannibal, however, declared that the foremost of all generals in experience and ability was Pyrrhus, that Scipio<sup>6</sup> was second, and he himself third, as I have written in my life of Scipio. And in a word, Pyrrhus would seem to have been always and continually studying and

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<sup>4</sup> The conflict between Pyrrhus and Demetrius for the Macedonian throne.

<sup>5</sup> Antigonus I Monophthalmus, the founder of the Antigonid dynasty and the father of Demetrius I Poliorcetes.

<sup>6</sup> P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus.

meditating upon this one subject, regarding it as the most kingly branch of learning; the rest he regarded as mere accomplishments and held them in no esteem.”

**15 Plutarch, *Life of Demetrius* XLI.2 – 3.**

“Demetrius therefore plundered Epeirus, but Pyrrhus fell upon Pantauchus, and after a battle in which the two commanders came to close quarters and wounded each other, routed him,<sup>7</sup> took five thousand of his men prisoners, and slew many of the rest. This wrought the greatest harm to the cause of Demetrius. For Pyrrhus, who was not so much hated for what he had done as he was admired for making most of his conquests in person, acquired from this battle a great and splendid name among the Macedonians, and many of them were moved to say that in him alone of all the kings could they see an image of the great Alexander's daring; whereas the others, and particularly Demetrius, did but assume Alexander's majesty and pomp, like actors on a stage.”

**16 Polybius, *The Histories* VI.51.3., 5 – 8.**

“But at the time when they entered on the Hannibalic War, the Carthaginian constitution had degenerated, and that of Rome was better... For by as much as the power and prosperity of Carthage had been earlier than that of Rome, by so much had Carthage already begun to decline; while Rome was exactly at her prime, as far as at least as her system of government was concerned. Consequently the multitude at Carthage had already acquired the chief voice in deliberations; while at Rome the senate still retained this; and hence, as in one case the masses deliberated and in the other the most eminent men, the Roman decisions on public affairs were superior, so that although they met with complete disaster, they were finally by the wisdom of their counsels victorious over the Carthaginians in the war.”

Chapter 3

**1 Polybius, *The Histories* I.4.7 – 11.**

“He indeed who believes that by studying isolated histories he can acquire a fairly just view of history as a whole... I think he would very quickly avow that he was formerly very far away from the truth and more like one in a dream. For we can get some idea of a whole from a part, but never knowledge or exact opinion. Special histories therefore contribute very little to the knowledge of the whole and conviction of its truth. It is only indeed by study of the interconnection of all the particulars, their resemblances and differences, that we are enabled ... to derive both benefit and pleasure from history.”

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<sup>7</sup> Pyrrhus routed Demetrius' army.

**2 Polybius, *The Histories* VIII.2.2 – 6.**

“It is impossible to get from writers who deal in particular episodes a general view of the whole process of history. For how by the bare reading of events in Sicily or in Spain can we hope to learn and understand either the magnitude of the occurrences or the thing of greatest moment, what means and what form of government Fortune has employed to accomplish the most surprising feat she has performed in our times, that is, to bring all the known parts of the world under one rule and dominion, a thing absolutely without precedent? For how the Romans took Syracuse and how they occupied Spain may be learnt from the perusal of such particular histories; but how they attained to universal empire... is difficult to discern without a general history.”

**3 Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* XIX.3.**

“Do not suppose that you will rid yourself of this fellow by making him your friend; nay, you will bring against you others, and they will despise you as men whom anybody can easily subdue, if Pyrrhus goes away without having been punished.”

**4 Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* XIX.4.**

“After Appius<sup>8</sup> had thus spoken, his hearers were seized with eagerness to prosecute the war, and Cineas<sup>9</sup> was sent back with the reply that Pyrrhus must first depart out of Italy, and then, if he wished, the Romans would talk about friendship and alliance; but as long as he was there in arms, they would fight him with all their might.”

**5 Livy, *From the founding of the city* XXVIII.44.14 – 15.**

“Let Italy, which has so long been harassed, at length enjoy some repose; let Africa, in her turn, be fired and devastated. Let the Roman camp overhang the gates of Carthage rather than that we should again behold the rampart of the enemy from our walls. Let Africa be the seat of the remainder of the war. Let terror and flight, the devastation of lands, the defection of allies, and all the other calamities of war which have fallen upon us, through a period of fourteen years, be turned upon her.”

**6 Polybius, *The Histories* I.83.2 – 4.**

“Hiero during the whole of the present war<sup>10</sup> had been most prompt in meeting their<sup>11</sup> requests and was now more complaisant than ever, being convinced that it was now in his own interest for securing his Sicilian

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<sup>8</sup> Ap. Claudius Caecus.

<sup>9</sup> The Epirote envoy.

<sup>10</sup> The mercenary revolt.

<sup>11</sup> Carthage.

domains that Carthage should be preserved, and that the stronger power<sup>12</sup> should not be able to attain its ultimate object entirely without effort. In this he reasoned very wisely and sensibly, for such matters should never be neglected, and we should never contribute to the attainment by one state of a power so preponderant, that none dare dispute with it even for their acknowledged rights.”

**7** Livy, *From the founding of the city* XLII.30.1 – 6.

“Amongst the free nations and communities the common people were, as usual, almost to a man in favour of the worse side, and supported the king and the Macedonians. You would see great diversity amongst the views and sympathies of the ruling classes. One... party, comprising the most respectable and sensible men, if they had in any case to choose a master, would have preferred the Romans to Perseus. If they had been free to choose their condition, they would have had neither side made more powerful through the overthrow of the other, but would have preferred that the strength of both being equally balanced, a lasting peace on equal terms might be established. In this way the cities, placed between the two, would be under the best conditions, for one would always protect the helpless from injury at the hands of the other.”

**8** Polybius, *The Histories* V.104.4 – 7.

“I address myself especially to King Philip. For you, Sire, the best security is, instead of invading the Greeks and making them an easy prey to the invader, on the contrary to... attend to the safety of every province of Greece as if it were part and parcel of your own dominions. For if such be your policy the Greeks will bear you affection and render sure help to you in case of attack, while foreigners will be less disposed to plot against your throne, impressed as they will be by the loyalty of the Greeks to you. If you desire a field of action, turn to the west and keep your eyes on the war in Italy, so that, wisely biding your time, you may some day at the proper moment compete for the sovereignty of the world.”

**9** Polybius, *The Histories* V.105.1 – 8.

“Agelaus by this speech made all the allies disposed for peace and especially Philip, as the words in which he addressed him accorded well with his present inclination... so they came to an agreement on all the points of detail, and after ratifying the peace the conference broke up, each carrying back to his home peace instead of war. All these events took place in the third year of the 140<sup>th</sup> Olympiad<sup>13</sup>... It was at this time and at this conference that the affairs of Greece, Italy and Africa were

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<sup>12</sup> Rome.

<sup>13</sup> 217 BCE.



first brought into contact. For Philip and the leading statesmen of Greece ceased henceforth, in making war and peace with each other, to base their action on events in Greece, but the eyes of all were turned to issues in Italy. And very soon the same thing happened to the islanders and the inhabitants of Asia Minor. For those who had grievances against Philip... no longer turned to the south and east, to Antiochus and Ptolemy,<sup>14</sup> but henceforth looked to the west, some sending embassies to Carthage and others to Rome, and the Romans also sending embassies to the Greeks, afraid as they were of Philip's venturesome character and guarding themselves against an attack by him."

**10 Polybius, *The Histories* III.2.8.**

"I shall deal with the troubles of Egypt, and tell how, on the death of Ptolemy, Antiochus and Philip,<sup>15</sup> conspiring to partition the dominions of his son,<sup>16</sup> a helpless infant, began to be guilty of acts of unjust aggression, Philip laying hands on Egypt and on Caria and Samos, while Antiochus seized on Coele-Syria and Phoenicia."

**11 Polybius, *The Histories* XIV.1a.4 – 5.**

"The political tendencies of the kings<sup>17</sup> were clearly revealed during these years.<sup>18</sup> For all that had been hitherto a matter of gossip about them now became clearly known to everyone, even to those who were not at all disposed to be curious."

**12 Polybius, *The Histories* XV.20.1 – 4.**

"It is very surprising that as long as Ptolemy in his lifetime could dispense with the help of Philip and Antiochus,<sup>19</sup> they were very ready to assist him, but when he died leaving an infant son<sup>20</sup> whom it was their natural duty to maintain in possession of his realm, then encouraging each other they hastened to divide the child's kingdom between themselves and be the ruin of the unhappy orphan. Nor did they, as tyrants do, take the pains to provide themselves with some paltry pretext for the shameful deed, but at once acted in a fashion so unscrupulous and brutal that they well deserved to have applied to them the saying about the food of fishes, that though they are all of the same tribe the destruction of the smaller ones is food and life to the larger. Who can look into this treaty as into a mirror without fancying that he sees reflected in it the image of all impiety toward the gods and all savagery

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<sup>14</sup> Ptolemy IV Philopator, Philip V, and Antiochus III the Great.

<sup>15</sup> Supra, no. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Ptolemy V Epiphanes.

<sup>17</sup> Philip V of Macedon and Antiochus the Great.

<sup>18</sup> 204 – 200 BCE.

<sup>19</sup> Supra, no. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Supra, no. 8.

toward men, as well as of the unbounded covetousness of these two kings?”

**13** Livy, *From the founding of the city XXXI*.14.4 – 5.

“For the king<sup>21</sup> himself was not conducting the siege of Athens, but was principally occupied with the attack on Abydus, and was now trying his strength in naval battles with the Rhodians and Attalus, in neither case with conspicuous success; however, his spirits were kept up, partly by his naturally impetuous disposition, partly by a treaty which he had concluded with Antiochus,<sup>22</sup> king of Syria, according to which the wealth of Egypt, which both coveted when they heard of the death of King Ptolemy,<sup>23</sup> was soon to be divided between them.”

**14** “Letter of complaint to Zenon from a non-Greek (ca. 256-255),” in *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest: A selection of ancient sources in translation*, ed. M.M. Austin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 418.

“To Zenon, greetings... you left me in Syria with Crotus<sup>24</sup> and I carried out all the instructions in connexion with the camels and I was blameless towards you. And when you ordered to pay me my salary (Crotus) gave me nothing of what you had ordered... I was compelled to run away to Syria to avoid dying of hunger. I have therefore written to you to inform you that Crotus is responsible. And when you sent me again to Philadelphia to Jason,<sup>25</sup> and I did everything I was told to... for nine months he gives me nothing of what you had ordered... They have treated me with contempt because I am a barbarian. I therefore request you, if you please, to order them to let me have what is owed to me and in future pay me regularly, so that I do not die of hunger because I do not know how to speak Greek.”

**15** “Letter to Zenon from two *hierodouloi* of Boubastis,” in *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest*, 419.

“To Zenon, [from] the *hierodouloi*<sup>26</sup> of Boubastis, who are feeders of cats, greetings. The king<sup>27</sup> rightly granted exemption from compulsory labour to men of this profession throughout the country, and

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<sup>21</sup> Philip V of Macedon.

<sup>22</sup> Antiochus the Great.

<sup>23</sup> Ptolemy IV Philopator.

<sup>24</sup> A Greek employer of the letter’s author.

<sup>25</sup> A second Greek employer.

<sup>26</sup> Members of the native priesthood.

<sup>27</sup> Ptolemy II Philadelphus.

Apollonius<sup>28</sup> did the same... but Leontiscus<sup>29</sup> forcibly sent us to work at the harvest, and in order to avoid troubling you, we carried out the work imposed on us. But now Leontiscus has sent us a second time to go and make bricks... He is protecting the brick-makers... who ought to be doing the work now,<sup>30</sup> as it suits his own ends. Please therefore conform yourself to the order issued by the king and Apollonius the *dioiketes*.<sup>31</sup> For apart from you we have no one else present here to appeal to. Farewell.”

**16 Polybius, *The Histories* III.26.3 – 7.**

“How did he<sup>32</sup> venture and on what authority to state... that there was a treaty between Rome and Carthage by which the Romans were obliged to keep away from the whole of Sicily... and that the Romans broke the treaty and their oath by first crossing to Sicily? There is, as a fact, no such document at all, nor ever was there; yet in his Second Book he states thus in so many words. I mentioned the subject in the introductory part of this work, but deferred until the present occasion the detailed treatment it deserves, in view of the fact that many people, relying on Philinus' work, have false notions on the subject... if he supposes that they crossed contrary to treaty and to their oath he is obviously ignorant of the true facts.”

**17 Polybius, *The Histories* III.9.1 – 5.**

“One may ask why I make any mention of Fabius<sup>33</sup> and his statement. It is not from apprehension lest it may find acceptance from some owing to its plausibility; for its inherent unreasonableness, even without my comment, is self-evident to anyone who reads it. But what I wish is to warn those who consult his books not to pay attention to the title, but to facts. For there are some people who pay regard not to what he writes but to the writer himself and, taking into consideration that he was a contemporary and a Roman senator, at once accept all he says as worthy of credit. But my own opinion is that while not treating his authority as negligible we should not regard it as final, but that readers should in most cases test his statements by reference to the actual facts.”

**18 Polybius, *The Histories* XXIV.13.4., 13.6.**

“But if we ourselves, ignoring our own rights, instantly without protest make ourselves subservient, like prisoners of war, to any and every order,

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<sup>28</sup> Ptolemy's finance minister, and Zenon's superior.

<sup>29</sup> The *archiphylatikes* (police-chief) of Boubastis.

<sup>30</sup> The priests felt that their status in Egyptian society was demeaned by physical labour.

<sup>31</sup> Finance minister.

<sup>32</sup> Philinus of Agrigentum was a Sicilian Greek who lived during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and wrote a history of the First Punic War.

<sup>33</sup> Q. Fabius Pictor was a Roman senator and historian of the Second Punic War.

what difference will there be between the Achaean League and the people of Sicily and Capua, who have long been the acknowledged slaves of Rome?"

"I know too well," he<sup>34</sup> said, "that the time will come when the Greeks will be forced to yield complete obedience to Rome; but do we wish this time to be as near as possible or as distant as possible? Surely as distant as possible."

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<sup>34</sup> Philopoemen.

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